

MOTHER LANGUAGE

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Editor

Professor Dr. Mohammad Ashaduzzaman



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Dialect Decline in Bangladesh: Causes and Policy Implications

Salma Haque*

Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History</i> Date of Submission 01-02-2026 Date of Acceptance 06-05-2026 Date of Publication 15-06-2026	One of the most important topics for sociolinguists today is the decline and extinction of dialects and minor languages in the country of Bangladesh. The paper discusses how the death of a dialect is not an unintentional or spontaneous event, but rather is caused by unequal distributions of power in society and the social and economic stratification created by specific language ideologies. Language-related theories of ideologies and Pierre Bourdieu's idea of linguistic capital serve as the theoretical framework to understand the continuing dominant status of Bangla in Bangladesh due to government policies, education systems, and conditions in the job market. The methodology used in the research is qualitative and comprises language (education) policy analysis, recent research literature review, and secondary analysis of educational and demographic statistics. A mixed-method approach provides an overall position of macro-level institutions as well as day-to-day language use. Several reasons contributing to dialect extinction have been identified. These include prominent use of Bangla in symbolic and material respects, weak institutional support, rural migration to urban areas, ineffective multilingual education, and lack of intergenerational transmission of the
<i>Keywords</i> Decline, Dialects, Causes, Shift, Policy, Bangladesh, Preservation	

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dialects/languages. The prioritization of Bangla and English as it relates to schooling and the workplace establishes a language hierarchy in favour of mainstream languages at the expense of dialects.

Introduction

Linguistic diversity in Bangladesh can be seen through the use of both Standard Bengali and the various dialects and indigenous languages of the minorities. This diversity is important because it has implications for not only how people communicate but also for how they identify themselves with their culture. Many dialects and indigenous languages of the minorities are “at greater risk due to reports from the field of sociolinguistics around the world” (Bromham et al., 2022: 165) and the evidence of their decline.

Chambers and Trudgill (2004: 3) define “a dialect as a linguistic variety, either socially or locally, that has a similar syntactical structure to the standard form of the language but varies from it in other respects, such as the sounds that make up words and the words themselves”. In Bangladesh, Sylheti and Chittagonian could be considered dialects of Bangla, although the academic community does not agree as to whether or not these two languages share enough common features to constitute dialects. There are also indigenous languages spoken by the Chakma, Marma, and Santali peoples; these languages have distinct grammar and culture from either Bangla or the dialects of Bangla. Thus, “many of these indigenous languages have been identified as endangered languages” (UNESCO, 2010: 12).

Both dialects and indigenous languages in Bangladesh are rapidly declining due to the dominance of Standard Bangla, which is used in virtually every situation – from the workplace to public spaces to family gatherings. In addition, both dialects and indigenous languages are becoming increasingly rare due to the widespread use of Standard Bangla in institutions and interpersonal interactions. Bourdieu (1991: 56) states that “linguistic capital is the vehicle by which dominant

languages achieve a certain degree of prestige and status with the larger society". The association of Standard Bangla with success, opportunity and progress establishes its prestige while diminishing the value of other languages – thereby providing the basis for the replacement/eradication of languages through restricted domain use. Additionally, supporting evidence comes from Bangladesh's education system, where schools primarily teach students in Standard Bangla as the medium of instruction. This has left little room for dialects and indigenous languages. Studies of language instruction in Bangladesh have found that "when language instruction is one-dimensional by using only one language, students will develop lower skill levels in other languages" (Hossain, 2018: 49).

The increase in globalization and digitization is further widening the divide between Standard Bangla and English (as neither is associated with social status, economic advancement, or increased employability) and dialects (which are viewed as unsophisticated, unrefined, and having little social value). This shows how "attitudes regarding status and urbanity influence language use" (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994: 58). Because dialects fail to reach and become part of successive generations, and "the scholarly belief that a shift in one's language, from his/her mother tongue to a more dominant language, can contribute to an unintentional cultural merge or loss of original identity" (Fishman, 1991). The inability of children to learn their regional dialects makes it very difficult to preserve local dialects (Fishman, 1991, 101). Furthermore, the representation of dialects in media and on the Internet continues to diminish. Standard Bangla is "frequently represented in national radio and television broadcasting, as well as in cyberspace. However, most regional and indigenous languages continue to have little exposure to the general public" (UNESCO, 2022: 3).

Currently, there is a worldwide trend of dialects disappearing (Bromham et al., 2022: 168). However, the case of Bangladesh is somewhat unique in that the existence of a large number of dialects (Bangla being a major one) plays a more significant role in national identity than in any other country. Dialect marginalization is really

caused by the fact that there are very few schools, or institutions, in which the dialects or any local languages are taught since the vast majority of them use standard Bangla as the primary mode of communication. Studies show that “teaching a child in only a single language will increase the number of children who will lose their first language” (Hossain, 2018: 49). There are global opportunities and jobs associated with globalization and the development of media technologies that promote the hierarchical system that has standard Bangla, and English, as being “more important than dialects; therefore, globally, there are a lot of ideologies surrounding language hierarchy, and how they affect the way an individual uses that particular language” (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). As a result of the above, the intergenerational transmission of dialects has been impacted. Furthermore, the challenge to revitalizing a dialect will be further compounded by not exposing children to dialects in the home.

This study will be an analysis of the sociolinguistic processes responsible for dialect loss and how they have been affected by global, national and local organizations, ideologies and economic systems and will examine the context of dialect loss within the framework of language maintenance and linguistic diversity.

Problematic Issues for Research: The loss of language and dialect is a major concern in the field of sociolinguistics. Investigators of language erosion in various spaces, whether through anthropology or social science, conducted studies that identify a plethora of languages which are “faced with language elimination because of education, globalization, urbanization and government language policies” (Bromham et al. 2022:165). However, most studies do not include an investigation into the unique sociolinguistic climate that exists within a post-colonial, multi-lingual society such as Bangladesh.

Bangladesh demonstrates a rich area of case studies for researching the issue of language loss. Languages in Bangladesh include: Standard Bangla (as the earned, official language), Sylheti, Chittagonian, Noakhali, Chakma, Marma, Santali, etc. Most of Michigan’s indigenous languages are not taught, have little formality,

and no institutional acknowledgement, and are primarily used for informal purposes.

This theme is very important, as the Standard Bangla language is present in the educational system and the process of creating identities, as well as having created a language hierarchy. Thus, the minority languages are marginalized in terms of social and economic values compared to Standard Bangla. According to Bourdieu (1991: 56), “language is both a form of linguistic capital, as well as a form of symbolic capital and economic capital.” The first two forms of capital (linguistic and symbolic) become the legitimate and prestigious form of capital while the last form of capital (economic) is the least prestigious of all.

People in Bangladesh have been forced to use Standard Bangla as a means of gaining higher social status through urbanization, migration and job opportunities. Furthermore, globalization and the new media have strengthened the relationship between Standard Bangla, English and modern world and continued to marginalize the dialects; the dialects are mainly thought of as rural or informal.

Although there has been substantial scholarship on this topic, there are still areas that require further investigation. To begin with, many studies have approached the languages and dialects spoken by Indigenous Peoples as distinct from one another, rather than treating them as parts of a common sociolinguistic whole. Furthermore, there has been very little application of global theories—such as those pertaining to language shift, linguistic capital, or language ideology—to the findings in relation to Bangladesh. Finally, there needs to be much more thorough focus on the manner in which institutional mechanisms, ideologies, and everyday practices interact to facilitate language shift.

Both the theoretical and practical significance of the current research are well-known in the area of study. In terms of theory, it represents an important contribution to the field of sociolinguistics by applying Fishman’s (1972) Theory of Language Shift Model, Bourdieu’s (1991) Linguistics of Capital, and the numerous

perspectives of Language Ideology to Bangladesh in an integrative manner. In terms of practical significance, this study documents the dialect loss problem as it relates to both the linguistic dimensions of dialect loss and the socio-institutional dimensions.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this research is both theoretical and practical. On the theoretical side, it advances the field of sociolinguistics by applying Fishman's model of language shift, Bourdieu's linguistics of capital, and language ideology perspectives to Bangladesh in a comprehensive manner. On the practical side, this study illustrates the fact that loss of dialects is not only a linguistic issue but also one that has a number of socio-institutional ramifications.

The present study provides a contextualized account for understanding the issue of language endangerment from a global perspective in relation to Bangladesh. It illustrates how globalization impacts are replicated locally via institutional and ideological practices. Furthermore, the present study lays the foundation for formulating policies regarding education, media, and dialect preservation.

Research Rationale

Whereas general language shift may carry certain consequences, dialect shift causes permanent loss of cultural and cognitive diversity. Every dialect represents its own philosophy, culture, history, and knowledge system. Thus, given the great importance of preserving dialects, this study aims to establish who should be blamed for their diminishing numbers based on literature review. Moreover, understanding of these issues is crucial for preserving linguistic equality.

Understanding these facts is important since language inequality is inevitable without comprehension of these factors. People speak dialects or native languages for expressing ideas and communicating. Dialect loss occurs because of exclusion and discrimination that prevents people from active participation in the social processes. This problem becomes even more complicated in Bangladesh, where

alongside the Standard Bangla, there are many ethnic languages and dialects.

Second, the present language policy in Bangladesh promotes Standard Bangla and English without offering any support to the dialects. Thus, dialects are being neglected in schools and in the media, posing challenges for intergenerational transfer and acquisition. It is evident from the findings of the paper that policy measures are needed that should address the root cause of the loss of dialects. It is, therefore, inevitable that the young generation loses cultural connection with the dialects spoken by their forefathers. It is highly possible that today's children may lack linguistic skills to converse in their dialects, which will affect their cultural identity.

Finally, this study will contribute useful information to the Endangered Languages field. Although a number of studies have looked at the causes of endangered languages, none had particularly focused on Bangladesh. This study will therefore be significant because it analyses the dialect loss in Bangladesh and fills a research gap by contributing to the preservation of linguistic diversity, promoting policy and education reform, providing empowerment of communities, and building knowledge base on dialect sustainability in Bangladesh.

Research Objectives

This research project consists of three principal goals:

- 1) To examine the dominant sociocultural, political, and educational influences on dialect endings (deaths) in Bangladesh.
- 2) To investigate how national language policies and the dominance of Standard Bangla affect the ongoing use and transmission of dialectal varieties; and
- 3) To offer suggestions for conserving the diversity of dialectal and indigenous language use in Bangladesh.

Research Questions

The study is guided by these questions, which match the research objectives:

- a. What are the major socio-political and educational causes of dialect decline in Bangladesh?
- b. How do national language policies and the dominance of Standard Bangla influence the transmission and use of dialects?
- c. What measures can be adopted to preserve and promote dialectal and indigenous linguistic diversity in Bangladesh?

Literature Review

In the following section, this review discusses the primary reasons for the decline of dialects and indigenous languages in Bangladesh based on the thematic areas: (1) Global and theoretical perspectives on language endangerment, (2) Policies and institutions, (3) Education and intergenerational transmission, (4) Attitudes and ideologies, (5) Urbanization and migration, (6) Technology and grass root movement.

Global and Theoretical perspectives on Language Endangerment

Language endangerment is a significant concern in the field of sociolinguistics. UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger indicates that, when a language is no longer transmitted between generations primarily due to political, economical or cultural causes it becomes endangered. More than 40 per cent of all existing languages were endangered and "in the event that languages were lost so was the cultural heritage related to the language" (UNESCO, 2023).

Bangladesh is a smaller-scale picture of global language endangerment. There is a Standard Bangla, a number of regional varieties, and more than thirty minority languages which have become endangered. As for scholars' findings in Bangladesh, they support the general pattern that "the marginalization and (potential) disappearance of minority languages in Bangladesh is the result of language hierarchy and state-imposed standardization" (Rahman, 2023; Awal, 2024).

Policy and Institutional Structures

In relation to policy, the existence or absence of language policy is closely linked with the fate of language survival. Although Bangla is the only official state language of the country, there has not been a clear multi-lingual policy in Bangladesh designed for the preservation of minority languages. According to Saif and Sultana (2022), “due to lack of policies to promote language diversity, the minority languages are not institutionally supported by government institutions, schools or any public areas.”

Bangla and English are widely used in the classrooms of Bangladesh, while indigenous languages receive little recognition. As children rarely get the opportunity to acquire the skills of literacy and writing in their mother tongue, their transmission into subsequent generations will remain difficult. The study data finds that those receiving a mother-tongue based education are more likely to understand and remember what they are taught, however; programs for such education are rare due to constraints on resources and policy limitations. This imbalance perpetuates the concept that the indigenous languages do not provide economic or educational benefits and families thus favor Standard Bangla or English at the expense of their mother tongues.

Socio-Cultural Attitudes and Language Ideology

The attitude towards languages within community play significant roles. According to the survey of Awal (2024: 45), “it is assumed that Standard Bangla and English are modern, prestigious, while dialect seems to have less importance”. The assumption causes the usage of language decline among people in the community. The media coverage clearly indicate that attitude toward language depends on economics and society as *The Daily Sun* and *BD-Pratidin* (2025) mention “many of the ethnics group has switched their own language into the others’ due to less economic advantage to their native language”. Such attitude shift is very important because it affects language transfer as the family transmit the language to generation, hence language

transmission will be affected by the shift in family attitude due to influence from the media and the society. Urbanization, migration and linguistic shift: The Dhaka-Sylhet case the role of urbanization and internal migration makes the dialect disappear faster. As people migrate from the rural and ethnic community and development occurs and migration increases the pace of loss of local dialect. When people migrate from their rural or ethnic area into city such as Dhaka they discover that many languages can be found there, however, Standard Bangla is the most common language there.

Here is another one of the commonly cited examples of speakers of Sylheti who relocate to Dhaka for study and work. Everyday conversation takes place in Sylheti (a vigorous regional dialect) in Sylhet, while its speakers are often found to switch to Standard Bangla at work and study, or when talking to others, in order to maintain intelligibility and to comply with societal expectations. This process leads to a gradual decrease in the use of Sylheti among certain groups, especially young urban natives, who, although are capable of understanding the dialect, will no longer be actively speaking it.

Technological and Community-Based Interventions

The latest studies provide insight into new projects that people are doing together to combat the loss of their language and these efforts will enhance our understanding of how technology can help. One such example is the Multilingual Cloud Repository Project (*Business Standard*, 2025) that will digitally archive endangered languages (ie. audio and text) in order to document them and make them available for future generations. Such projects not only aim to preserve endangered languages, but also demonstrate the ongoing under-representation of indigenous and non-indigenous languages in both the physical world and digital media.

Emerging technologies also represent fresh opportunities. Neural translation machines for translating between Standard Bangla and

diverse regional dialect variants have been proposed by Khandaker et al. (2025). Digital platform and a community-driven technique can also promote communication, education, and the comeback of low-resource languages.

These case studies indicate localized technological initiatives can be excellent means to help maintain our languages, while acknowledging structural barriers hinder those efforts.

Synthesis

According to these studies, on the whole, the studies suggest that a network of language policy ideologies; education exclusion; social and cultural degradation and a growing trend of urbanization can have an impact on language demise (loss of use in specific domains); and intergenerational transmission of languages (through the family). All of this impacts an individual's linguistic identity as well as the potential for revitalization through technology and community initiatives if there were supportive government policies; inclusive educational practices and socio-economic investment.

Theoretical Framework

Using a sociolinguistic framework, the relationship between language, power, and social hierarchy in Bangladesh has been analyzed. The research relies heavily on Joshua Fishman's concept of Language Shift and Maintenance, which discusses how minority languages and dialects can become extinct over time when intergenerational transmission ceases, or when these languages and dialects are not being used in vital social contexts such as family, education, community engagement, and cultural practices. The most critical component of a language's longevity according to Fishman is "intergenerational transmission; once younger generations begin failing to use a language for everyday communication, a language shift is inevitable" (Fishman, 1999).

Methodology

Research Design

The current project employs qualitative description and document review to analyze previously collected data; The current project can analyze the decline of dialect in Bangladesh via an analysis of documentary data as opposed to collecting new empirical data.

Furthermore, the current project will not test hypotheses or investigate direct causal relationships; it will be focused on analyzing, comparing and combining existing information about languages in Bangladesh to reveal commonality and rationale for dialect extinction.

Data Sources and Selection Criteria

Secondary Data consisted of: journal articles, scholarly books, policy documents and other published reports. All the sources provided by UNESCO are secondary. The majority of the data was published between 2020-2025.

Sources were found through Google Scholar, BanglaJol and ResearchGate. The criteria established were: highly relevant to dialect degradation or language shift and or endangered minority languages; focused on Bangladesh or similar multilingual contexts; substantive research foundation; and published in reliable sources.

All relevant works contain direct relevance to languages that are currently experiencing loss or shift and or endangered minority languages.

Works are considered critically for valid evidence both empirically as well as theoretically. All evidence is published within reputable academic and non-academic publications. Excluded from selection were older works that were methodologically unsound and/or opinion-based; rather, only those publications were included for the purpose of enabling a critical review of the trends, interpretations, and limitations of the concept of dialect extinction so to validate that the data presented in this analysis can support the conclusion drawn.

Analytical Framework

The investigation used thematic analysis of the selected literature from which thematic patterns emerged through the identification and collating of themes in groups of five (5). The first group of five (5) consists of: community language policy (ideology); educational practices; urbanization/migration; tech/media innovations; and transmission across generations.

The themes emerged from this repeated analysis of data, representing the actual experiences associated with these events. Each theme demonstrates a facet of sociolinguistics in Bangladesh and describes how social policy and economic influences affected their family language choices and how long dialects would exist (or not).

The data collected from the participants were analyzed, and an explanation of the findings was provided. Further analyses of the data were conducted and theoretical constructs were integrated. No measurable data were produced.

Ethical Considerations

This study uses only published secondary data and does not involve human participants. All sources follow APA (7th edition). Since no personal data is used, there are no ethical concerns. This research uses literature, policies, and reports rather than fieldwork, surveys, or interviews, so it cannot document language use in real time, community realities, and subtle differences in dialect. Using published sources means you cannot verify how language is used within rapidly changing contexts. It also makes it more difficult to know how individuals feel and what they think about themselves and their use or misuse of their language (code-switching). The methodology described here provides a comprehensive perspective on recent studies, but it provides evidence for many of the causes of dialectal decline in Bangladesh (i.e., structural inequality, institutions, ideology, and socioeconomic) and the way in which these factors provide evidence for understanding how global language endangerment trends are seen in Bangladesh.

Findings

Data from Fishman's Theory, Bourdieu's notion of linguistic capital, and language ideology were consulted before analyzing the results. The important findings are as follows: (1) The decline in the use of dialects in Bangladesh can be attributed to both structural causes (i.e., language policy, economics, institutional structure) and attitudes and beliefs. (2) Such support for Bangla and English decreases the support for regional or indigenous languages through policies promoting either language. (3) Education, government, and employment keep language hierarchy alive. (4) Language preference and identity are formed through ideological pressure. These four forces combined contribute to the decline in the use of dialects in Bangladesh.

Language Policy and Ideological Hierarchies (Objective 1 & 2)

Research indicates that national ideology primarily positions the highest authority on Bangla. Bourdieu's concept of linguistic capital can help explain why both Bangla and English are used more frequently than the rest of the languages (including claimed regional and Indigenous Languages) within schools, governments, and in the labour force. The decreasing use of the regional dialects is exacerbated by this hierarchy of languages. The decision about which language will be used by an individual is also influenced by language policies.

Educational Practices and Domain Restriction (Objective 2 & 3)

When we look at evidence, we see that the educational system supports a loss of minority languages by restricting the use of minority languages in the school system. Using Fishman's framework, if there are less dialects within the various important institutions, it causes a breakdown of intergenerational language transfer because children will begin associating educated success with the standard dialects of Bangla and English. The importance of this finding illustrates how educational institutions play a significant role in promoting the standardization of the language.

Urbanization, Migration, and Economic Mobility (Objective 1 & 3)

It is shown through a thematic analysis that the transition from rural to urban locales contributes to the rapid rate of dialectal erosion. Due to the perceived value of using language, as related to employment opportunities, speakers have turned to Bangla for the purpose of achieving economic success within cities. This reinforces Bourdieu's theory that language choices are driven by pragmatic as well as symbolic motivations in relation to economic mobility and language shift; which is aligned with the purpose of this study, as it seeks to identify what modifications occur within dialects as a result of socio-economic influences.

Media and digital platforms are another common way in which dialects aren't reflected. When we don't see dialects on television or in online forums, the dialects risk becoming ineffective and losing their function as a device for communication. Dialect invisibility through the lens of languages' ideology leaves minority languages without visibility. Therefore, their status is diminished, and young people will have minimal access to them.

Intergenerational Transmission and Family Domain (Objective 3)

In Bangladesh, families of all classes are now using their dialects less frequently than ever before. As more Bangla families are using Bangla at home for both education and work, there has been a corresponding decline in the use of dialects in the home. This suggests that the survival of a language, as suggested by Fishman, depends on maintaining strong intergenerational transmission of language; thus, this is currently decreasing in Bangladesh.

Synthesis of Findings

The results of this study suggest that dialect loss in Bangladesh takes place due to the existence of a monetary form of language equity, lack of institutional support for dialect speakers, and social prejudice toward dialects as valid forms of communication. The dialect decline results from a combination of macro and micro influences including globalization/travel and language use in various locations.

Discussion

The patterns of findings in this study will be analyzed with sociolinguistics Language Shift & Maintenance Theory, Bourdieu's concept of Linguistic Capital and Language Ideology. These findings suggest that the decline of dialects in Bangladesh has been influenced by Agents of Change (social structure, beliefs about the function and legitimacy of language, and interactions between speakers and non-speakers) rather than inherent language development processes.

Language Ideology and Structural Hierarchy

The state's promotion of standard Bangla as the primary representation of national identity indicates that governments endorse an idea about how people use language. Research conducted in Bangladesh reveals that favoring the use of institutions that are using standard Bangla increases the speed of the disappearance of regional varieties of language. This corresponds with "concept of a language market where the dominant language (standard Bangla) increases in value while the minority dialects lose value" (Bourdieu, 1991: 56).

Education and Domain Loss

Education make people not to use dialects outside houses. Young people have realized that dialects have no use in the educational sectors and offices. As a result of migrating to urban centres for employment-related purposes, speakers and students use standard Bangla in order to enhance their chances of success in the labour market. Formal education is also reducing dialect speaking with families.

Media Absence and Digital Invisibility

These factors are also causing dialect decline in Bangladesh.

Intergenerational Transmission

Another major finding supports Fishman's (1991, p. 101) conclusion that

“supporting the intergenerational transfer of language is essential to its survival”. In Bangladesh, many urban families trying to speak in standard language so that their children can learn to succeed. The parents are consciously avoiding dialect speaking at homes making dialects extinct.

Synthesis

The phenomenon of decline in dialects across Bangladesh is occurring because of the support for the standard form of the language, which is supported by the various levels of social rank within the society, therefore causing economic pressures to affect individuals’ choices regarding which form of the language to use. The combination of the above factors leads to a reduction in dialect usage in every part of Bangladesh. This is similar to the general world trend in the loss of languages, but more so to the extent that Bangla has such a strong association with the identity of the nation.

According to the findings, Bangla and English are the two languages that are encouraged mostly throughout India—Bangla as the primary language of education, and English by both job seekers and employment). However, as people migrate to urban areas, they will frequently alter their dialect for a chance at improved living conditions. This migration decreases the amount of exposure and visibility of dialects through traditional and/or new communication channels. When families stop teaching their children a dialect, that dialect will likely disappear. Standard Bangla is given official preference, while dialects are generally used in informal contexts, enhancing the existing superiority/inferiority dynamic between the two varieties of the same language and propelling through this process towards a single form of the language.

Future Research Directions

Ethnographic methods will remain important for future studies that are concerned with collecting empirical evidence of the use and change of dialects as they occur over time and in different places. Particular attention must also be paid to how dialects are passed

down from one generation to the next, to the dialectal differences between urban and rural communities, and most importantly, to how adolescents use dialects today. Data should include evidence of the loss of dialect materials, which are under-represented in Bangladesh. Any data that documents the existence of dialects that are likely to become extinct must be recorded (using audio and video, word lists, and oral traditions) in order to preserve their existence.

UNESCO may assist universities and cultural organizations in working together. With future studies focusing on how technology, social media, and AI affect language change and revive dialects, it will be valuable to compare similar trends in multilingual regions across south Asia in order to determine how language endangerment occurs within south Asia.

Teamwork will be necessary if we are to save the diversity of language in Bangladesh; we need to record dialects; we need to improve educational systems, and we also need to create incentives or support systems to ensure that dialects remain living means of communicating and are not considered out-dated cultural relics.

Conclusion

Bangladesh is losing dialects as a result of structural, ideological, socio-economic, linguistic, and cyclical processes, and this is not a mere linguistic change that takes place outside the ecological context. The marginalization of regional dialects and indigenous languages using the discursive framework is due to the dominance of Standard Bangla combined with restrictions on speaking a single language, urbanization, negative attitudes toward different types of a language, and limited access to media. These issues create less social space for dialects and restrict their intergenerational transfer, resulting in the endangerment or extinction of many dialects. This research shows that dialects are lost together with the cultures and identities of their speakers. A comprehensive official language policy and an education system that respects dialects will help. Community-based action must take place and the media and digital platforms must work closely with dialect communities. Preserving dialects is an essential part of maintaining culture and national identity.

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Exploring Preservation Techniques for Ethnic Minority Languages in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Preservation of ethnic minority languages has been highlighted worldwide. However, very few studies highlighted the preservation techniques worldwide. But a very few studies in Bangladesh context are rare. To minimize this gap, this study explores the existing literature for a sustainable policy reform to preserve the ethnic minority languages in Bangladesh. Our study explores effective preservation mechanism for policy. It covers the nature, knowledge and language preservation policies worldwide. In this viewpoint, this study depends on a multi-stage search process of literature, which is designed by specific inclusion and exclusion criteria to maintain a focused analysis. Based on the findings from the literature, our study suggests that independent national language commission, mother tongue-based multilingual education and digital linguistic bank are essential techniques to preserve ethnic minority languages in Bangladesh. These recommendations might be useful for national and international policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders to design national language policy for ethnic minority languages.

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Background

The 1952 Language Movement is deeply ingrained in Bangladesh's linguistic identity. With 98% of the population using Bangla as their primary language, with this scenario Language Movement now reflects the demographic reality that the language is the ultimate medium for mass communication, state administration, and national unity, resulting in an atmosphere that seems to be monolingual. A critical examination, however, shows that this dominance frequently hides the complex multilingual customs that are a part of Bangladeshi culture. While Bangla maintains ideological supremacy, the functional necessity of English in the judiciary and corporate sectors, alongside the deep-seated presence of Arabic in religious spheres, suggests a complex linguistic hierarchy that the current "monolingual" state narrative fails to fully acknowledge.

Bangladesh, which has 41 different languages, is a country with considerable linguistic stratification despite its apparent homogeneity (Faquire, 2010). While 98% of total population consists of the Bangali ethnolinguistic community, the remaining 2% comprises approximately 45 different ethnic communities using around 26 to 40 distinct languages, which have cultural legacy and is position under danger (Islam, 2020). These ethnic minority languages lack the institutional support required for survival because they are marginalized in national discourse. There is a gap between the country's celebrated history of linguistic rights and its current treatment of linguistic diversity because ethnic people face significant obstacles to social mobility in the absence of formal recognition; mother tongues of ethnic people are excluded from the formal structures of education and law (Gupta, 1997).

The urgent creation of a National Language Policy (NLP) is required due to the conflict between unilingual and a multilingual reality. By redefining linguistic variety as a national asset rather than an obstacle to integration, such a framework would close the divide between the excluded minority and the dominating majority. A comprehensive strategy would bring the state's legal framework into line with its pluralistic and globalized reality by standardizing

Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) and defining the functional roles of Arabic and English language. In the end, safeguarding all 41 languages is more than simply a practical requirement for a country that emerged from a fight against linguistic hegemony; it is a moral requirement of social fairness and an essential step toward preserving true national integrity.

Our study has a significant impact because it brings urgent gaps in understanding the dimensions of ethnic minority languages loss, offering relevant policy recommendations based on the findings from related observational studies, enrich related literature, and develop specific guidelines for preservation of ethnic minority languages. Objectives of the study are to explore essential facts and findings from different countries, and develop a need-based national language policy for ethnic minority groups.

Literature Review

Every government's choice of language or languages to use when interacting with its citizens is guided by its language policy (Wyss, 2020). In actuality, however, Bangladesh is not the only country facing the difficulty of striking a balance between linguistic nationalism and functional multilingualism. The "98 vs. 2" dilemma, in which a dominant majority language coexists with several minority or indigenous tongues, has been handled in a variety of ways by countries throughout the Indian subcontinent and beyond. A road map for balancing mother-tongue preservation with national unity can be found by examining the experiences of nearby nations like Sri Lanka and Bhutan as well as global examples like Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Nigeria.

The linguistic journey of Sri Lanka serves as a powerful testament to the volatility of language politics and the necessity of inclusive governance. History of this nation was long defined by the "Sinhala Only" Act of 1956, a policy that prioritized one language at the expense of social harmony, eventually fueling ethnic conflict. Critically, the subsequent shift toward a trilingual framework- integrating Sinhala,

Tamil, and English as a link language- marks a strategic move toward social reconciliation (Wyss, 2020). By embedding these languages into the functional bedrock of the state, including Parliament, provincial councils, the judiciary, and the education system, Sri Lanka has attempted to use language policy as a mechanism for peace-building (Herath, 2015). This transition highlights that for a multilingual state, legal inclusivity is not merely a linguistic choice but a prerequisite for political stability.

In contrast, Bhutan represents a unique model of “linguistic engineering,” where policy is used proactively to balance traditional identity with global integration. To unify a landscape of over 20 diverse native languages- such as Tshangla, Lakha, and Lepcha- the government promoted Dzongkha as a central pillar of cultural defense and national heritage (Dorjee, 2014). However, Approach of Bhutan is notably pragmatic; while Dzongkha is standardized to preserve soul of the nation, English is strategically employed as the medium for modern education, business, and global diplomacy. This dual-track system allows for a functional synergy where Dzongkha dominates the National Assembly and cultural life, while both languages are encouraged in official correspondence. Unlike the reactive shifts seen in Sri Lanka, Bhutan’s model demonstrates how a state can consciously design a bilingual path to navigate the demands of both local preservation and global presence.

Beyond the sub-continent, post-colonial states demonstrate diverse strategies for navigating the tensions of globalization through language. The Philippines emerged as a pioneer of “Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education” (MTB-MLE), legally mandating 19 indigenous languages in early schooling to foster cognitive bridges toward Filipino and English (Rodriguez-Fransen, 2025). However, this ambitious framework has recently faced significant legislative challenges, with 2024–2025 marking a shift toward “flexible” implementation due to resource constraints. In contrast, Thailand has traditionally maintained a “unilingual” stance centered on Standard Thai as a tool for national consolidation. Yet, recent shifts- characterized by a “regrowth of interest” in regional dialects and a

push for English proficiency- reveal a pragmatic attempt to remain competitive within the ASEAN region (Sahan et al., 2025). These cases illustrate that even established unilingual states must eventually negotiate with the multilingual demands of regional integration and local identity.

In other post-colonial contexts, language policy acts as a fragile “official bridge” between competing ethnic and economic interests. Malaysia exemplifies a perpetual “tug-of-war” between heritage and utility, with policies fluctuating between Bahasa Melayu for nationalistic identity and English for scientific and technological advancement (Renganathan, 2023). This oscillating approach reflects the difficulty of balancing indigenous pride with the requirements of a globalized economy. Similarly, Nigeria, with its vast landscape of over 500 indigenous languages, utilizes English as a neutral “official” medium to mitigate ethnic friction among its major groups- Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo (Batibo, 2005). In these fragmented societies, the choice of a colonial “link language” is less an endorsement of imperialism and more a strategic necessity for maintaining political stability. Ultimately, these global experiences suggest that successful language policies must balance the symbolic power of local tongues with the functional power of international ones.

Methodology

For our study to be transparent, and less biased, we follow a multi-stage process design. To maintain the focus of our study, we establish clear guidelines for what should and should not be included in our literature review. Peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, newspapers, edited books, working papers, and dissertations from a specific time period are given greater weight under the first criterion. However, editorials and articles in languages other than English that are directly relevant to the primary recommendations fall under the final criterion.

Several digital databases and repositories are reviewed in order to ensure a comprehensive compilation of information and data. These include the official websites of the Ministry of Cultural

Affairs, UNESCO, the Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO (BNCU), the National Text Book Board (NCTB), the Ministry of Education, and the International Mother Language Institute (IMLI), in addition to popular and extensively used research and academic websites like Science Direct, JSTORE, and Research Gate.

The search strategy combines certain keywords that are relevant to the objectives of our study with Boolean operators (AND, OR, and NOT). These methodical literature reviews ensure that a broad variety of still-relevant material is found, encompassing both the fundamental theories and the most recent findings in the field of ethnic minority languages.

To reduce the pool of available literature, the selection techniques employ a multi-tier screening procedure. To eliminate duplicate entries and studies that are not pertinent based on meta-data, a title and abstract screening is first carried out. Second, we thoroughly read the remaining papers to ensure that they adhere to the rigorous research criteria and have the necessary subject relevance for our investigation. The finalized core literature set serves as the foundation for the study.

The final stage, integration, involves comparing data and conclusions from many social and economic contexts. This stage allows us to examine both single instances that deviate from the norm and broad trends in ethnic minority languages. This provides us with a more comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Human subjects are not used in our work, and careful citation upholds research integrity. We review each document for internal validity, the reasoning behind its policy implications, and its conclusions.

Preservation Techniques for Ethnic Minority Languages

Multiple structural and socio-cultural challenges are the commonly

identified problems for preserving ethnic minority languages in Bangladesh. Lack of political commitment along with limited institutional and administrative supports, the dominance of Bangla in education and print and electronic media, shortage of standardized writing systems, and shortage of teaching materials and trained educators are the main barriers to preserving ethnic minority languages. In addition, insufficient documentation and research on ethnic minority languages are far from providing policy guidelines and ways forward for preserving ethnic minority languages. To minimize these impediments, it is essential to consider the following policies.

Constitutional Refinement and Inclusive Governance

A reliable NLP must start by balancing the state's pluralistic reality with its single identity. The strategy should formally identify the 41 indigenous languages as "National Heritage Languages" while upholding Article 3 of the Constitution's sanctity of Bangla as the state language. In order to ensure that the spirit of the 1952 Language Movement is extended to the 2% minority population, this legislative framework would move the state from a "unilingual" position to a "rights-based" multilingual paradigm. The state can remove the systemic obstacles that communities like the Chakma, Marma, and Santal currently face by creating an independent National Language Commission, which would provide the guideline and framework required to protect ethnic minority and endangered languages and offer translation services in the judiciary and public administration.

Standardizing Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)

The policy must close the cognitive gap between the national language and the home language in order to be considered educationally valid. In order to ensure literacy and cognitive development, the proposed structure promotes a three-tier linguistic model: using the Mother Tongue as the primary medium of instruction from Pre-Primary to Grade 3; progressively introducing Bangla as the national link language; and strategically integrating English as a global tool for science and

technology. The “periphery effect,” in which minority pupils drop out as a result of linguistic marginalization, is avoided by this planned transition. The program guarantees that language diversity is viewed as a national asset that promotes rather than impedes social mobility and academic performance by standardizing curriculum materials in indigenous scripts and training specialized teachers.

Balancing Functional Utility and Cultural Integrity

The “tug-of-war” between cultural heritage and global utility in the professional and religious spheres must also be addressed by a strong strategy. This entails acknowledging the usefulness of Arabic in the citizens’ religious and cultural lives while also elucidating the importance of English in the corporate and judicial sectors to preserve competitiveness in the global economy. The policy would go beyond ideological arguments in favor of a practical distribution of linguistic functions by establishing a Digital Linguistic Bank. In the end, this all-encompassing framework guarantees Bangladesh’s continued unity as a country where national integrity is established through an organized, inclusive, and justice-focused approach to its 41-language reality rather than through linguistic erasure.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The proposed National Language Policy (NLP) for Bangladesh highlights a critical development from a historically “unilingual” state narrative to a “right-based” multilingual paradigm. By formally recognizing the 41 languages of ethnic minority as “National Heritage Languages,” Bangladesh can reduce the gap between the 1952 Language Movement and the marginalization of ethnic minorities. Our study suggests that a structured approach, i.e., balancing the constitutional sanctity of Bangla with the functional utility of English and Arabic and the preservation of mother tongues is a moral and practical necessity for social justice and national integrity.

In order to obtain this version, it is recommended that the government should create a separate NLP to protect ethnic minority

languages that are in danger of extinction and to offer translation support services when needed. Additionally, the Ministry of Education, IMLI, and NCTB should collaborate to develop a policy for implementing need-based MTB-MLE and create a three-tier linguistic model where the mother tongue is used as the medium of instruction from Pre-Primary to Grade 3 with financial and technical support from the UNESCO. Finally, it is crucial to generate a digital linguistic bank essential for preserving ethnic minority languages as a part of cultural heritage without sacrificing global economic competitiveness.

Despite these comprehensive recommendations, our study faces a set of lacunas. The methodology relied heavily on literature survey and secondary data from reputable database rather than primary field surveys or direct consultations with community leaders of all 41 ethnic groups. As a result, while our recommendations draw valuable lessons from global and regional ethnic minority languages preservation practices like the Philippines and Sri Lanka, it may not fully capture the unique, localized socio-economic barriers or the specific script-readiness of endangered languages in Bangladesh. Future research should incorporate longitudinal field studies to assess the practical feasibility and resource constraints of implementing such a wide-scale linguistic transition.

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The Language of Uprising: Multi-Layered Linguistic Practices During the July 2024 Movement in Bangladesh

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Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History</i> Date of Submission 29-01-2026 Date of Acceptance 06-05-2026 Date of Publication 15-06-2026	The July 2024 uprising in Bangladesh was not only a political crisis but also a profound linguistic event. Protest mobilisation unfolded through a layered repertoire of Bangla, English, religious idioms, revolutionary slogans, and global activist vocabulary. This article examines how language shaped political meaning, collective identity, and justice claims during the uprising. Grounded in sociolinguistics, critical discourse analysis, and decolonial language theory, it analyses key protest terms such as quota, boishommo, fascist, inqilab, zindabad, zalem, mozlum, nipirito, azadi, insaf, Bangla blockade, and March to Dhaka. Drawing on media coverage, protest slogans, social media posts, and public statements, the study argues that multilingual protest discourse reflects Bangladesh's layered political history and contemporary struggles over power and legitimacy. Recognising protest language as political knowledge, the article highlights its central role in democratic participation, resistance, and post-uprising memory formation.
<i>Keywords</i> July 2024 Uprising, Language and politics, Protest discourse, Multilingualism, Mother language	

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Introduction

Language has long been central to Bangladesh's political imagination, serving not only as a medium of communication but also as a foundation for identity, resistance, and claims to justice. From the Language Movement of 1952—which established Bangla as a symbol of cultural autonomy—to later struggles over democracy and inclusion, linguistic practices have remained deeply intertwined with power and collective memory (Ahmed, 2014; Kabir, 2005; Rahman, 2010). Language has repeatedly functioned both as a rallying force and as a boundary marker, shaping belonging, voice, and legitimacy in public life.

The July 2024 Uprising represents a contemporary moment in this trajectory that also demands attention as a linguistic phenomenon. Protesters did not merely occupy streets; they actively produced and contested meaning through slogans, chants, hashtags, graffiti, and symbolic expressions. Language became a primary tool for articulating grievances, asserting moral claims, and challenging authority. The uprising can therefore be understood not only as a confrontation with political power but also as a struggle over narrative and legitimacy (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2015).

Protest discourse during this period drew on a layered linguistic repertoire crossing cultural and ideological boundaries. Bangla remained central to emotional resonance and collective identity, while English political vocabulary and Arabic-derived moral terms expanded the movement's symbolic reach. Expressions such as *boishommo* (inequality), *insaf* (justice), *inqilab* (revolution), *fascist*, *shutdown*, and *March to Dhaka* circulated simultaneously, reflecting a negotiation between local meanings and global protest frames (Blommaert, 2010; Rahman, 2019). This multilingualism allowed the uprising to speak both to domestic audiences and to transnational publics.

By foregrounding language, this study argues that the July 2024 Uprising reveals deeper structural tensions within Bangladeshi society—over inequality, governance, morality, and belonging. Language functioned as a site of struggle where competing visions of

justice and authority were articulated and contested. Examining these practices shows that moments of political rupture are also moments of discursive transformation: words do not merely describe change; they help produce it.

Identification of the Research Problem

Although the July 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh has generated extensive political commentary, its linguistic dimensions remain largely underexplored in academic research. Most analyses have focused on governance, state–society relations, and protest dynamics, often treating slogans, chants, and key terms as peripheral rhetoric rather than as constitutive elements of political action. Such approaches risk overlooking how language actively shapes the articulation of grievances, the construction of collective identities, and the moral legitimacy of mobilisation (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2015).

Research on political discourse shows that linguistic choices play a decisive role in framing injustice, mobilising participants, and drawing boundaries between “us” and “them” (Snow & Benford, 1988; Tilly, 2008). In multilingual, postcolonial contexts like Bangladesh, protest language is especially complex, combining vernacular Bangla, colonial English, religious vocabularies, and global protest idioms, each carrying distinct historical and ideological meanings (Blommaert, 2010; Rahman, 2010). Despite Bangladesh’s long history of language-centred mobilisation—from the 1952 Language Movement to contemporary protests—there has been little systematic analysis of how such layered linguistic practices operate during large-scale uprisings. The central research problem addressed in this article is therefore the absence of a structured, empirical examination of multi-layered language use in the July 2024 Uprising. Without this lens, interpretations remain incomplete, missing how linguistic practices mediated mobilisation, inclusion and exclusion, and competing visions of justice. By foregrounding language as a site of struggle, the study seeks to illuminate how political meaning is negotiated in moments of rupture and how discourse both reflects and shapes broader social transformation in Bangladesh and similar contexts.

Objectives of the Research

This study pursues five interrelated objectives to deepen understanding of the linguistic dynamics of the July 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh. First, it aims to identify and categorise the principal linguistic registers used in protest discourse, including vernacular Bangla expressions, English political terminology, Arabic-derived moral vocabularies, and hybrid slogans. Mapping these registers enables a systematic account of the uprising's multilingual and layered communicative landscape (Blommaert, 2010; Rahman, 2010).

Second, the research analyses how specific words, phrases, and slogans functioned as political, moral, and symbolic instruments. It examines how language framed injustice, legitimised resistance, attributed responsibility, and articulated reform demands (Fairclough, 1995; Snow & Benford, 1988). Third, the study explores the relationship between language, power, and collective identity, focusing on how linguistic choices produced inclusion and exclusion, moral binaries, and contested authority among protestors, the state, and other actors (Bourdieu, 1991; Wodak, 2015). Fourth, the research situates July 2024 protest language within Bangladesh's longer history of language-based mobilisation, particularly the legacy of the 1952 Language Movement, to identify continuities and transformations (Kabir, 2015; Rahman, 2019). Finally, it contributes to global debates on mother language, multilingualism, and political discourse from a Global South perspective, foregrounding linguistic agency as central to democratic participation and social justice (May, 2012; Pennycook, 2017).

Literature Review

The role of language in political mobilisation has been extensively studied across sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and political theory, revealing that language does not simply reflect social realities but actively shapes them. Fairclough (1995) argues that discourse constructs social practices by legitimising power relations and normalising inequality, while van Dijk (2008) emphasises that political

discourse structures ideological positions by controlling access to meaning, particularly in contexts of conflict and resistance. In protest movements, language becomes a critical resource for articulating grievances, framing injustice, and mobilising collective action.

Social movement theory highlights the strategic function of linguistic framing in shaping mobilisation outcomes. Snow and Benford's (1988) theory of collective action frames shows that movements use diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational language to define problems, propose solutions, and inspire participation. Slogans, chants, and symbolic terms are therefore not merely rhetorical devices but instruments of resonance, legitimacy, and identity formation. This framework provides a useful lens for analysing how protest language during the July 2024 Uprising articulated moral claims, constructed oppositional identities, and contested dominant narratives.

In South Asia, language has historically intersected with power, identity, and nationhood. Colonial and postcolonial language policies established hierarchical linguistic orders privileging certain languages while marginalising others, shaping access to education, employment, and cultural capital (Alim, 2010; Rahman, 2002). Bangladesh's Language Movement of 1952 exemplifies the political power of mother language, where Bangla served as a medium for resistance, collective identity, and moral legitimacy. Ahmed (2016) notes that the movement elevated Bangla beyond communication, symbolising dignity, autonomy, and democratic aspiration.

Contemporary scholarship emphasises the growing complexity of protest discourse in a globalised, digital era. Movements increasingly operate through multilingual and hybrid repertoires, blending local languages with global vocabularies of rights, justice, and resistance (Blommaert, 2014; Pennycook, 2017). Techniques such as code-switching, borrowing, and semantic recontextualisation allow activists to address multiple audiences simultaneously, from local communities to international observers. Tarrow (2011) similarly observes that transnational protest cycles rely on widely circulated slogans and keywords, which acquire locally specific meanings.

Digital media amplifies these dynamics by accelerating the circulation, remixing, and visualisation of language. Zappavigna (2012) demonstrates that social media platforms enable rapid dissemination of evaluative language, hashtags, and slogans, transforming linguistic practices into networked political action. In Bangladesh, online and offline protest spaces have become closely intertwined, allowing language to move fluidly between street demonstrations, social media, and mainstream news.

Despite these insights, a gap remains in scholarship on Bangladeshi uprisings, particularly from a mother language-centred perspective. Analyses often prioritise institutional, electoral, or security dimensions, relegating language to a symbolic or secondary role. Systematic exploration of multilingual and morally charged protest discourse—as a site of struggle, memory, and meaning-making—remains limited. This study addresses this gap by examining the linguistic dimensions of the July 2024 Uprising, situating them within Bangladesh's historical legacy of language-based resistance and contemporary global debates on language, power, and political mobilisation.

Research Rationale

This study is significant academically and socially, as it positions language at the centre of understanding political mobilisation in Bangladesh. While existing scholarship on Bangladeshi politics has focused on electoral processes, governance challenges, and social movements, comparatively little attention has been paid to the linguistic practices through which political meanings are produced, contested, and circulated during mass mobilisation. By analysing the linguistic registers of the July 2024 Uprising, this research demonstrates how language functions not merely as a medium of expression but as a constitutive force shaping political subjectivities and collective action (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

The study also contributes to scholarship on mother language and multilingualism in postcolonial contexts. Contemporary political

communication increasingly employs hybrid linguistic repertoires, including colloquial Bangla, English, digital slang, and symbolic visual-textual forms such as graffiti. Examining how Bangla functioned alongside other linguistic resources during the July 2024 Uprising challenges monolithic views of mother language and aligns with sociolinguistic perspectives that conceptualise language as fluid, strategic, and context-dependent (Blommaert, 2010; Pennycook, 2017).

From a societal perspective, understanding the language of the uprising is crucial for democratic engagement, policy discourse, and reconciliation processes. Language choices influence whose voices are heard, which grievances are legitimised, and how moral authority is constructed in political movements (Bourdieu, 1991). Slogans, chants, and digitally circulated phrases mobilise participants while shaping public narratives and institutional responses. Analysing these linguistic practices offers insights into the symbolic operations of power during crises and the formation of collective memory (Assmann, 2011).

By situating the July 2024 linguistic practices within Bangladesh's historical trajectory of language-based political movements, this research provides a historically grounded framework for interpreting contemporary struggles. The study advances scholarly debates on language and power while offering practical insights for more inclusive, reflective, and linguistically conscious approaches to governance, democratic participation, and post-uprising societal reconciliation.

Research Questions

This study is guided by four interrelated research questions that collectively examine the linguistic dynamics of the July 2024 Uprising and their broader political and historical significance in Bangladesh. The study first investigates the types of language and linguistic registers mobilised during the uprising. This includes exploring the range of linguistic forms circulating across protest spaces, such as formal and colloquial Bangla, regional and youth registers, slogans, chants, placards, graffiti, and digital texts. By tracing linguistic

practices across street demonstrations and online platforms, the research analyses how different registers functioned communicatively, politically, and symbolically within the movement.

A second area of inquiry focuses on how particular terms and keywords—such as *quota*, *boishommo*, *fascist*, and *azadi*—operated as political, moral, and symbolic signifiers within protest discourse. The study examines how recurring words condensed complex grievances, articulated ethical claims, and fostered collective identification among protesters. It also explores how meanings were negotiated, contested, and stabilised through repetition and circulation, drawing on both local political histories and transnational vocabularies of resistance.

The research further examines the role of multilingualism in shaping the reach, resonance, and interpretation of the uprising. This involves analysing interactions between Bangla, English, and other linguistic resources in slogans, media narratives, and social media communication. The study considers how multilingual practices extended global visibility and intergenerational accessibility while also producing tensions around authenticity, authority, and inclusion.

Another key concern of the study is the historical positioning of the movement's language practices within Bangladesh's longer trajectory of struggles over mother language, political rights, and symbolic recognition. By comparing contemporary protest discourse with earlier mobilisations—particularly the 1952 Language Movement—the research identifies continuities and transformations in how language functions as a tool of resistance and identity formation.

Collectively, these questions are grounded in critical discourse analysis and sociolinguistic perspectives that view language as social action embedded in power relations (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). They also draw on postcolonial and globalisation-oriented sociolinguistics, which emphasise the hybrid and strategic use of linguistic resources in political movements (Blommaert, 2010; Pennycook, 2017). Linking micro-level linguistic practices to macro-level historical processes enables a multidimensional analysis of language, power, and collective identity in Bangladesh.

Research Theoretical Framework

This study adopts an integrated theoretical framework combining critical discourse analysis (CDA), sociolinguistics, and decolonial language theory to examine the multi-layered linguistic practices of the July 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh. This approach allows protest language to be understood simultaneously as a site of power, social interaction, and historical struggle.

Critical discourse analysis serves as the primary lens for investigating how language both reflects and actively constructs power relations during political contestation. CDA scholars argue that discourse is not a neutral medium but a form of social practice through which dominance, resistance, and legitimacy are produced and challenged (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008). In the context of the July 2024 Uprising, CDA enables close analysis of how terms such as *fascist*, *boishommo*, and *insaf* functioned to morally evaluate authority, shape oppositional identities, and frame claims for justice. This involves examining lexical choice, repetition, intertextuality, and discursive framing across slogans, speeches, placards, and digital communication.

Sociolinguistic theory complements CDA by foregrounding the strategic and context-dependent nature of language use in multilingual societies. Drawing on work on linguistic repertoires, code-switching, and register variation, the study conceptualises protestors as deploying multiple linguistic resources to navigate diverse audiences and communicative spaces (Blommaert, 2010; Gumperz, 1982). The simultaneous use of Bangla, English, and Arabic-derived moral and political terms is understood not as inconsistency but as deliberate practice shaped by education, media circulation, religious registers, and global political vocabularies. This perspective illuminates how multilingualism extended the movement's reach while generating internal debates about authenticity, ownership, and linguistic authority.

Decolonial language theory provides historical and ideological grounding. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1986) critique of linguistic imperialism underscores that language choice in postcolonial

contexts is inseparable from struggles over cultural sovereignty, epistemic justice, and political emancipation. In Bangladesh, Bangla carries historical significance as a symbol of resistance rooted in the 1952 Language Movement, while global terms such as *azadi*, *inqilab*, and English bureaucratic expressions link local struggles to transnational discourses of rights, justice, and governance.

By integrating CDA's focus on power, sociolinguistics' attention to practice, and decolonial theory's emphasis on historical and ideological context, this framework facilitates a multidimensional analysis of the July 2024 Uprising. It situates protest discourse within immediate power dynamics while embedding it in Bangladesh's historical trajectory of language-based mobilisation, illustrating how language functions both as a resource and a battleground in moments of political rupture.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design, appropriate for exploring the meanings, functions, and socio-political implications of language during collective mobilisation. Qualitative approaches allow in-depth engagement with how social actors construct and negotiate meaning through discourse, symbolism, and interpretive practices (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Data Sources

Data were collected from three primary sources to capture the diversity and circulation of linguistic practices during the July 2024 Uprising. First, protest slogans, placards, and banners documented in newspapers, online portals, and photojournalistic archives were gathered. These visual-textual materials reflect the public-facing language of the movement and condense complex political claims into symbolic forms (Chilton, 2004).

Second, social media content—including posts, comments, hashtags, and shared images on platforms such as Facebook and X

(formerly Twitter)—was analysed to examine the evolution, circulation, and recontextualisation of protest language. Social media functions as a crucial site for contemporary political discourse, enabling rapid dissemination and remixing of linguistic forms (Zappavigna, 2012).

Third, public speeches and statements by protest leaders, student representatives, and state actors were collected from televised broadcasts, official press releases, and verified online recordings. This inclusion allowed comparative analysis of movement and state discourses, showing how legitimacy, authority, and moral claims were linguistically constructed (van Dijk, 2008).

Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling approach was employed to identify recurrent and symbolically significant linguistic elements. Focus was placed on terms, phrases, and expressions that frequently appeared, circulated widely, or became central to public debate (Paltridge, 2012). Examples include politically charged terms such as quota, boishommo, fascist, azadi, and inqilab, as well as hybrid Bangla–English expressions.

Analytical Approach

Data were analysed thematically using discourse analysis informed by CDA and sociolinguistic theory. Analysis focused on how language produced meaning, articulated grievances, assigned blame, and imagined alternative political futures. Attention was given to lexical choice, metaphor, moral and emotional framing, audience orientation, and patterns of multilingualism and code-switching (Fairclough, 1995; Blommaert, 2014). Iterative coding refined themes to capture dominant discursive patterns and internal tensions within the protest language.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were strictly followed. Although data were publicly available, social media users were anonymised to protect privacy and prevent harm (British Sociological Association, 2017). No private

communications were accessed, and the focus remained on linguistic and discursive patterns rather than individual identities, in line with standard practices in qualitative and digital discourse research.

Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that the July 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh was characterised by the interplay of multiple linguistic layers, reflecting both the complexity of the movement and the heterogeneity of its participants. Protestors mobilised a diverse repertoire of administrative, moral, revolutionary, religious, and globalised expressions, using language not merely as a medium of communication but as a central tool of political meaning-making. Importantly, this discourse was not abstract; it was materially visible in placards, graffiti, chants, and hashtags circulating both on the streets and across digital platforms. Language functioned simultaneously as expression, mobilisation, and political action, shaping how grievances were framed, legitimised, and disseminated (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008).

A closer examination of protest artefacts reveals how key terms were embedded in powerful, widely circulated communicative forms. Placards bearing slogans such as “Quota = Boishommo”, “No More Zalem Rule”, and “We Want Justice Now” condensed complex policy concerns into emotionally resonant and morally charged statements. Similarly, hashtags such as #NoQuotaNoPeace, #JusticeForStudents, #MarchToDhaka, and #InqilabZindabad #WeWantInsaf circulated rapidly on platforms like Facebook and X, transforming local linguistic expressions into networked political discourse. These examples illustrate that terms such as boishommo (inequality), zalem (oppressor), and insaf (justice) did not operate in isolation; rather, they were embedded within collective action frames that enabled participants to align around shared meanings and demands (Snow & Benford, 1988). Through repetition and circulation, these linguistic forms acquired symbolic power, reinforcing both emotional solidarity and political clarity.

Administrative and bureaucratic language also underwent significant transformation during the uprising. The term quota, originally confined to policy discourse, was re-signified into a potent symbol of systemic injustice and exclusion. Its frequent pairing with moral vocabulary—such as in the slogan “Quota means Boishommo”—demonstrates how technical language can be politicised and moralised. This transformation underscores a key insight of critical discourse analysis: language is not neutral but embedded within power relations, capable of both reproducing and challenging structures of authority (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008). In this context, protestors appropriated institutional terminology and rearticulated it in ways that exposed underlying inequalities.

At the same time, Bangla remained the emotional and symbolic core of the movement. Expressions such as *boishommo*, *nipirito* (oppressed), and *rastro meramot* (repair the state) carried deep cultural and historical resonance, grounding the uprising within Bangladesh’s long tradition of language-based political mobilisation. These terms constructed a moral narrative that framed the movement as a struggle between justice and injustice, echoing earlier historical moments such as the Language Movement of 1952. However, this Bangla-centric discourse did not operate in isolation; rather, it intersected dynamically with English and Arabic-derived vocabularies, producing a layered and hybrid linguistic field.

Another defining feature of the July 2024 Uprising was the influence of Gen-Z communication styles, particularly meme culture, sarcasm, and dark humour. Unlike earlier protest movements that relied primarily on formal rhetoric, this uprising incorporated digital-native forms of expression that blended humour with critique. Memes circulated widely with captions such as “দেশ ঠিক করতে এসে WiFi-ও বন্ধ” (“Came to fix the country, even WiFi got shut down”) or ironic Bangla-English hybrids such as “System reboot needed – রাষ্ট্র মেরামত চলছে”. These forms used parody, exaggeration, and irony to critique authority while maintaining engagement.

Meme culture served several important functions within the movement. First, it made political discourse more accessible, especially for younger participants accustomed to digital communication. Second, humour functioned as a coping mechanism in a politically tense environment, enabling dissent without always relying on direct confrontation. Third, memes enhanced the virality of protest language, allowing slogans and ideas to spread rapidly and be continuously reinterpreted. As Zappavigna (2012) argues, social media discourse thrives on shareability, and memes became a key vehicle for linguistic circulation. Importantly, humour did not dilute the seriousness of the movement; rather, it coexisted with moral and political registers, reinforcing the multi-layered nature of protest discourse.

The presence of revolutionary and religiously inflected terms such as *inqilab*, *zindabad*, *azadi*, *zalem*, and *mozlum* added further depth to this linguistic landscape. These terms connected the movement to broader historical and transnational imaginaries of resistance, embedding contemporary grievances within longer trajectories of struggle. This reflects what Blommaert (2014) describes as “layered historicity,” where words carry accumulated meanings across time and are reactivated in new contexts. In the July 2024 Uprising, such language enabled protestors to situate immediate demands within broader narratives of justice, liberation, and dignity. English-language expressions also played a strategic role in extending the movement’s reach. Terms such as “Bangla Blockade,” “complete shutdown,” “Gen-Z protest,” and “March to Dhaka” were widely used in both domestic and international media, ensuring that the movement was legible beyond national boundaries. This reflects a form of strategic multilingualism, where different languages are deployed for different audiences and communicative purposes (Tarrow, 2011). English functioned as a bridge to global visibility, while Bangla maintained local legitimacy and emotional depth.

Digital platforms further intensified these dynamics by enabling rapid circulation, remixing, and hybridisation of language. Hashtags,

memes, and short-form posts created a feedback loop in which linguistic expressions were continuously reproduced and reinterpreted. However, this speed also introduced certain limitations: while it amplified key messages, it sometimes simplified complex issues into easily shareable forms. This tension between depth and visibility is a defining feature of contemporary protest communication.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the July 2024 Uprising cannot be understood as a single, unified discourse. Rather, it functioned as a dynamic assemblage of linguistic practices, where formal and informal, local and global, serious and humorous elements coexisted and interacted. The inclusion of placard slogans, meme culture, and multilingual intersections demonstrates that protest language operated across multiple registers simultaneously, each contributing to the movement's overall impact.

Ultimately, this multilayered linguistic landscape reinforces the central argument of this study: in moments of political rupture, language becomes a site of struggle where meanings are negotiated, identities are constructed, and futures are imagined. The July 2024 Uprising illustrates that words—whether spoken, written, or memed—do not merely describe political change; they actively participate in producing it.

Results and Findings of the Research

The findings of this study demonstrate that language functioned as a central organising force during the July 2024 Uprising, shaping mobilisation, moral framing, and collective identity rather than serving merely as a decorative element. Across protest slogans, banners, social media posts, and public statements, linguistic choices structured both the communicative strategies and the symbolic universe of the movement. The results are presented under four interrelated themes.

First, language was integral to mobilisation. Protest discourse did not simply reflect pre-existing grievances; it actively constructed shared

meanings that enabled collective action. Administrative and policy terms such as quota were repeatedly invoked and recontextualised, transforming bureaucratic language into potent symbols of systemic injustice. This process illustrates the constitutive role of language in political action, consistent with critical discourse perspectives that emphasise how meaning-making mediates power and resistance (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008). The circulation of specific terms across both offline demonstrations and digital platforms indicates that linguistic cohesion was a key factor in sustaining the movement's momentum.

Second, Bangla served as the emotional and symbolic core of the uprising, even as English was strategically deployed to broaden reach. Bangla expressions—including *boishommo*, *zalem*, *mozlum*, *awaz uda*, *kotha ko*, and *rastro meramot*—conveyed moral, affective, and cultural resonance, facilitating solidarity and emotional identification among local participants. Concurrently, English phrases such as “blockade”, “Bangla blockade” “shutdown,” “complete shutdown,” and “March to Dhaka” acted as communicative bridges to international media, global civil society actors, and diasporic audiences. This pattern aligns with sociolinguistic research showing that multilingual repertoires enable local solidarity while supporting global visibility (Blommaert, 2014; Tarrow, 2011).

Third, moral and symbolic language was pivotal in constructing legitimacy and collective identity. Revolutionary and religiously inflected terms such as *inqilab*, *zindabad*, *azadi*, and *insaf* framed the uprising as an ethical struggle encompassing justice, liberation, and dignity. Such framing helped universalise grievances and legitimise resistance, resonating with social movement theory that underscores the mobilising power of moral discourse (Snow & Benford, 1988). Hybrid expressions combining Bangla, English, and symbolic terms expanded the movement's appeal across diverse audiences, reinforcing solidarity while negotiating different cultural and political registers.

Fourth, the linguistic diversity observed reflects Bangladesh's layered political and cultural history. The coexistence of Bangla,

English, and Arabic-derived terms illustrates how contemporary protest language draws on multiple historical trajectories, including the Language Movement of 1952, postcolonial state formation, and global political imaginaries. This “layered historicity” highlights the sedimentation of past struggles within present discourse, situating the July 2024 Uprising within a continuum of language-based political mobilisation rather than as an isolated event (Ahmed, 2016; Blommaert, 2014).

Collectively, these findings emphasise that the July 2024 Uprising was both a political and discursive phenomenon. Language emerged as a site of struggle, memory, and meaning-making, shaping how grievances were expressed, legitimised, and remembered. By foregrounding linguistic practices, this study provides empirical evidence on the centrality of mother language, multilingual repertoires, and symbolic discourse in postcolonial political mobilisation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed for scholars, educators, policymakers, and cultural institutions. These recommendations aim to enhance analytical, pedagogical, and policy engagement with language as a central dimension of political life in Bangladesh.

First, scholars should give greater attention to language in analyses of political movements, particularly within Bangladeshi and South Asian contexts. Existing studies often prioritise organisational structures, leadership, and policy outcomes, while marginalising language. This research demonstrates that mobilisation, legitimacy, and collective identity are fundamentally produced through discourse. Future studies should integrate critical discourse analysis and sociolinguistic approaches to capture how power is enacted and contested through linguistic practices (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008). Comparative analyses of linguistic repertoires across different uprisings could illuminate patterns of continuity and transformation in political discourse.

Second, educators should incorporate protest discourse into curricula on language, politics, and citizenship. Secondary and tertiary students can engage with slogans, chants, and digital texts from the July 2024 Uprising to develop critical awareness of how language shapes political realities. Such approaches align with critical literacy and democratic education frameworks, encouraging learners to interrogate language as a tool of power, resistance, and social meaning (Pennycook, 2001; Freire, 1970). Integrating real-world protest language into classroom discussions also reinforces the relevance of mother-language studies beyond literary and historical contexts.

Third, cultural institutions, universities, and archives should systematically document and preserve protest language. Slogans, banners, graffiti, and social media expressions are often ephemeral but constitute vital historical records of collective thought and emotion. Ethical collection and archiving, respecting anonymity where needed, would extend Bangladesh's tradition of language documentation, linking contemporary movements to earlier struggles such as the 1952 Language Movement (Ahmed, 2016). Archiving these linguistic artefacts creates resources for research, public reflection, and democratic engagement.

Finally, policymakers should recognise protest language as a legitimate form of political participation. Slogans, chants, and symbolic terms should not be dismissed as mere disruption; they represent meaningful contributions to public debate and moral discourse. Engaging with protest language through inclusive dialogues aligns with deliberative democratic principles and can foster trust, reconciliation, and more responsive governance (Habermas, 1996).

Collectively, these recommendations highlight the need to move beyond instrumental views of language and recognise its constitutive role in political life. By investing in research, education, documentation, and policy frameworks that foreground linguistic

practice, Bangladesh can strengthen democratic culture and its rich tradition of mother-language-based political engagement.

Conclusion

The July 2024 Uprising demonstrates that language is not merely a vehicle for protest but a constitutive force in political action. This study shows that the movement's multi-layered linguistic practices—ranging from Bangla mother-language expressions to English, Arabic-derived moral vocabularies, and revolutionary idioms—served as sites of meaning-making, through which grievances were articulated, moral boundaries drawn, and collective identities forged. Bangla remained central to emotional resonance and historical continuity, while hybrid registers expanded the uprising's symbolic reach and political legitimacy, reflecting Bangladesh's complex linguistic ecology and long-standing struggles for justice, dignity, and rights.

Analysing the uprising as a linguistic event deepens understanding of how discourse operates during moments of rupture. Findings confirm critical discourse insights that language actively shapes power relations rather than simply reflecting them (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008). Terms such as *boishommo*, *azadi*, and *fascist* functioned not only as descriptive labels but as moral framings that delineated adversaries and legitimised resistance. In this sense, language acted as a form of political practice, enabling participants to negotiate meaning, authority, and belonging amid rapidly shifting contexts.

The study also underscores the significance of mother language scholarship in political analysis. From the 1952 Language Movement to the July 2024 Uprising, linguistic consciousness in Bangladesh has been intertwined with democratic aspiration (Ahmed, 2016; Rahman, 2002). Yet the findings highlight the strategic coexistence of Bangla with other linguistic registers, challenging singular or purist notions of mother language and affirming sociolinguistic perspectives that multilingualism can be a resource for mobilisation rather than a barrier (Blommaert, 2014).

More broadly, the research highlights language's enduring power in public life. Where formal political channels are constrained or distrusted, linguistic spaces become crucial arenas for participation, dissent, and imagination. Recognising the language of protest is therefore essential not only for scholarly understanding but also for democratic practice. The July 2024 Uprising demonstrates that words do not merely accompany history—they help make it, shaping how societies remember, interpret, and act toward more just futures.

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Conceptualizing Mother Language as Symbolic Capital in Diplomatic Journalism: The Bangladesh Context

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Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History</i> Date of Submission 29-01-2026 Date of Acceptance 06-05-2026 Date of Publication 15-06-2026	Language plays a crucial role in diplomatic journalism as a source of authority and legitimacy. In Bangladesh, where national identity is deeply rooted in the mother language, this role is highly significant. This theoretical article conceptualizes mother language as symbolic capital within diplomatic journalism. It examines why Bangla, despite its strong cultural value, holds limited authority in elite diplomatic news discourse. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power, alongside journalism and translation studies, the paper argues that professional norms, reliance on English-language source texts and standard language ideology constrain the interpretive use of the mother language. Using Bangladesh as an illustrative context, it demonstrates how Bangla functions primarily for textual adaptation or cultural symbolism rather than as a full analytical resource. Finally, the study discusses the implications of this marginalization for linguistic sustainability and public communication.
<i>Keywords</i> Mother language, Symbolic capital, Diplomatic Journalism, Language ideology, Linguistic sustainability	

Introduction

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Language, Diplomacy and Symbolic Power

Diplomatic journalism plays an important role in shaping how a country is understood at home and abroad. Through reports on state visits, bilateral meetings, international summits, and foreign policy statements, journalists translate complex diplomatic activities into public narratives. These narratives not only inform citizens but also help construct national image and political meaning. Scholars argue that media does not simply report diplomacy; it actively participates in diplomatic communication through framing and language choice (Gilboa, 2005).

Language is central to this process. Diplomatic journalism usually values neutrality, caution, and professionalism. However, sociolinguistic and critical media studies show that language is never fully neutral because it carries power, ideology, and social hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 1995). Some languages and language varieties are considered more suitable for official communication, while others are viewed as emotional, informal, or inappropriate for elite discourse. These assumptions shape how journalists report diplomatic issues and which linguistic forms gain legitimacy.

In Bangladesh, language has strong political and cultural significance. Bangla is widely celebrated in cultural, educational, and political life. Yet its role in institutional domains such as diplomatic journalism remains more restricted. Diplomatic reporting often follows global professional norms and relies heavily on English-language press releases prepared for international audiences. As a result, journalists frequently work as translators or reformulators of English source texts rather than independent interpreters (Van Doorslaer, 2012). Bangla therefore functions mainly as a language of transmission, while the structure and tone of reporting continue to reflect global diplomatic discourse (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009).

Most studies on language and media in Bangladesh focus on nationalism, cultural identity, and political communication, emphasizing the historical and emotional importance of Bangla. However, limited attention has been given to how language operates

as symbolic power within diplomatic journalism. This paper addresses that gap by examining mother language as a form of institutional authority in diplomatic reporting.

Statement of the problem

Although language is central to diplomatic journalism, it is often treated as a neutral technical tool rather than a source of symbolic power. In professional journalism, certain linguistic styles are privileged because they are considered more suitable for international communication and institutional legitimacy. In Bangladesh, Bangla remains a powerful marker of national identity and collective memory (Rahman, 2010), but this symbolic recognition does not automatically provide authority within elite fields such as diplomatic journalism.

One major challenge is the dependence on English-language source texts prepared for international audiences. Consequently, Bangladeshi journalists often engage in translation and editorial reformulation rather than independent meaning-making. Bangla thus functions mainly as a language of transmission instead of a language of original interpretation (Van Doorslaer, 2012). This limitation is reinforced by professional norms that associate credibility with linguistic restraint and standardization (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009).

At the same time, standard language ideology in media institutions privileges formalized language over regional or everyday speech (Lippi-Green, 1994). This creates a gap between diplomatic reporting and the linguistic realities of ordinary people (Hasan & Rahaman, 2014). Although previous research on Bangladeshi media has explored nationalism and political economy, there is limited research on language as symbolic power in diplomatic journalism. This study therefore examines the gap between the cultural value of Bangla and its limited institutional authority in diplomatic reporting.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the role of mother language in diplomatic journalism from a theoretical perspective, using Bangladesh as an illustrative context. More specifically, the study aims to:

1. To conceptualize mother language as symbolic capital within the field of diplomatic journalism, rather than viewing it only as a cultural or emotional resource.
2. To explore how professional norms in diplomatic journalism influence language choice and limit the interpretive use of mother language.
3. To explain the impact of English-language source texts, such as official press releases, on the positioning of Bangla in diplomatic news reporting.
4. To examine how standard language ideology shapes journalistic practice, particularly through the preference for standardized registers and the exclusion of regional dialects.
5. To reflect on the implications of these linguistic practices for the long-term sustainability of mother language in upper-class public communication.

Literature Review

Existing scholarship on language, media, and power provides important foundations for understanding the role of mother language in journalism. However, these studies are often divided across nationalism studies, sociolinguistics, journalism studies, and translation studies. While each field offers valuable insights, limited attention has been given to how mother language functions simultaneously as a cultural symbol and a professional resource within diplomatic journalism.

Mother Language and National Identity

Mother language has long been understood as more than a communication tool in Bangladesh. Rahman (2010) explains that Bangla is constitutionally recognized and institutionally embedded in education, public life, and cultural production, giving it a central place in the national imagination. Research on language and nationalism consistently highlights the close relationship between Bangla and Bangladeshi identity. Bangla is often presented as the language of the people and a symbol of authenticity in contrast to colonial or global languages.

Although this literature successfully explains the symbolic and historical importance of Bangla, it mainly focuses on cultural representation and political ideology. Less attention has been given to how Bangla functions within institutional settings such as journalism and diplomacy, where authority depends on professionalism, neutrality, and credibility. This gap is especially important for understanding diplomatic journalism, where national identity is communicated through global institutional norms. The present study therefore extends this discussion by examining mother language not only as identity but also as symbolic authority (Rahman, 2010).

Language as Institutional Authority

Research in translation studies shows that news reporting across languages involves restructuring rather than direct translation. Van Doorslaer (2012) argues that journalists frequently reformulate institutional and international source texts according to newsroom conventions. This process is particularly visible in diplomatic journalism, which relies heavily on official press releases and international documents.

Bielsa and Bassnett (2009) further argue that the dominance of English in global news production strongly shapes this practice. Reports produced in other languages often retain the structure and terminology of English originals. In Bangladeshi diplomatic journalism, this means Bangla operates with limited scope for independent or locally grounded interpretation (Van Doorslaer, 2012; Bielsa & Bassnett,

2009).

Journalism Professionalism and Language Norms

Studies of newsroom culture show that professional journalism is closely linked to expectations about how news language should sound. Authority in journalism is often associated with impersonal tone, conceptual distance, and standardized language practices. This tendency is especially strong in foreign affairs and diplomatic reporting, where emotional or culturally specific expressions are discouraged (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009). Critical scholars challenge the idea that these conventions are neutral. Fairclough (1995) argues that standardized language appears objective while privileging upper-class ways of speaking. As a result, locally grounded or everyday language is often excluded from elite journalism. This helps explain why mother language, despite its social importance, remains tightly regulated in diplomatic reporting.

Standard Language Ideology and Linguistic Hierarchy

Standard language ideology is based on the belief that one approved form of language is naturally correct and suitable for serious communication. Media institutions reinforce this belief by consistently favoring standardized language as a sign of competence and credibility (Lippi-Green, 1994). In Bangladesh, research shows that this creates a hierarchy within Bangla itself, where formalized language varieties are valued more highly than everyday speech (Hasan & Rahaman, 2014). This pattern is especially visible in institutional journalism and provides an important framework for examining language practices in diplomatic reporting.

Research Gap

Although existing studies provide valuable insights into language, journalism, and power, there remains a clear gap in the literature. Most research either focuses on nationalism and cultural identity or examines journalism norms without sufficient attention to language as linguistic authority. There is limited theoretical work that connects

mother language, diplomatic journalism, and symbolic power in the Bangladeshi context. This study seeks to fill that gap by offering a conceptual analysis of mother language as institutional legitimacy and examining its implications for linguistic sustainability in elite journalistic discourse.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How can mother language be understood as a form of institutional authority in diplomatic journalism?
2. Why does mother language, despite its strong cultural and historical value in Bangladesh, hold limited authority in elite diplomatic news discourse?
3. How do professional norms of diplomatic journalism influence language choice and restrict the interpretive use of mother language?
4. In what ways does reliance on English-language source texts shape the role of Bangla in diplomatic reporting?
5. How does standard language ideology affect the inclusion or exclusion of regional varieties of Bangla in diplomatic journalism?
6. What are the implications of these linguistic practices for the long-term sustainability of mother language in upper-class public communication?

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in a sociological understanding of language as a form of power rather than simply a tool of communication. To explain the position of mother language in diplomatic journalism, the study mainly draws on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of symbolic capital along with insights from journalism studies and translation studies. Together, these perspectives help explain how language choice in

diplomatic reporting is shaped by institutional norms, professional authority, and global power relations.

Language as Institutional Legitimacy in the Diplomatic Field

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic capital and the linguistic field. Bourdieu (1991) argues that language functions within a "linguistic market" where some language varieties carry greater legitimacy than others. A language becomes symbolically powerful not because it is linguistically superior, but because influential institutions such as the state, media, and education system recognize it as authoritative. As a result, speakers who use institutionally accepted language are viewed as professional and credible, while non-standard forms are often considered informal or unsuitable for serious discourse.

This perspective helps explain the institutional nature of diplomatic journalism. Diplomatic journalism operates as a specialized discursive field with its own professional rules and forms of legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1991). Since journalists covering foreign affairs work closely with governments, diplomats, and international organizations, their language choices are strongly influenced by the need to appear professional and institutionally credible (Gilboa, 2005). Within this field, standardized and internationally recognized linguistic practices are rewarded. Consequently, journalists are expected to follow restrained and formal language styles aligned with global diplomatic discourse. This explains why mother language, despite its emotional and cultural importance, may hold limited authority in diplomatic journalism.

Standard Language Ideology and Linguistic Discipline

The concept of Standard Language Ideology further explains how linguistic hierarchy is maintained within journalism. This ideology refers to the belief that one standardized variety of language is naturally correct, neutral, and superior, while other varieties are considered inappropriate or less professional (Lippi-Green, 1994).

Media institutions play an important role in reinforcing this ideology. Fairclough (1995) argues that standardized language is often presented as objective and professional, whereas vernacular or regional forms are excluded from serious communication. As a result, language in journalism becomes highly disciplined, stripped of regional variation, and reshaped according to institutional norms. This process limits linguistic diversity and strengthens class-based language hierarchies by privileging speakers who are already fluent in standardized forms.

Translation, Transediting and the Role of the Journalist

Insights from translation studies further strengthen this framework. It views that rephrasing assumes a clear relationship between a source text and a target text. However, research on news translation challenges this assumption. Van Doorslaer (2012) argues that journalists often rewrite, summarize, and restructure texts rather than translating them directly. In diplomatic journalism, this process is particularly relevant because journalists frequently rely on English-language source texts such as official press releases and international news reports.

Dimension	Cultural capital of Bangla	Symbolic capital in diplomatic journalism
Historical role	Language Movement, identity	Limited institutional authority
Emotional value	High	Low
Professional legitimacy	Secondary	Dominated by English
Domain of use	Culture, ceremony	Textual adaptation, not interpretation

Table 1. Cultural capital and symbolic capital of Bangla in diplomatic journalism

By integrating symbolic capital theory, journalism professionalism, standard language ideology, and news translation studies, this framework provides a comprehensive explanation of the position of mother language in diplomatic journalism. It allows the study to move beyond viewing language as a neutral tool and instead examine how linguistic authority is produced, regulated, and distributed.

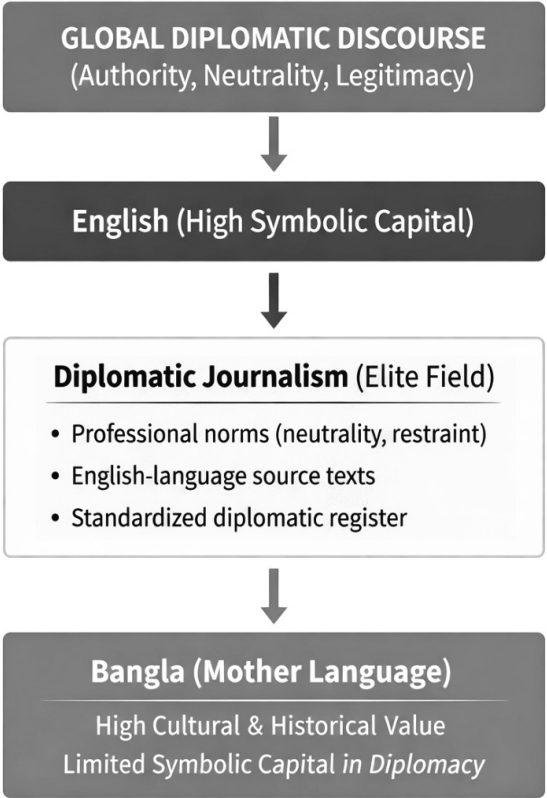


Figure 1. Conceptual positioning of mother language as symbolic capital in diplomatic journalism

Research Methodology

This study follows a theoretical and conceptual research approach. The aim of the research is not to collect empirical data or conduct statistical analysis, but to develop a conceptual understanding of how mother language functions as linguistic authority in diplomatic journalism. The analysis is based on established theories from sociolinguistics, journalism studies, and translation studies, particularly Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic capital and research on media discourse (Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 1995). These theoretical perspectives are used to

interpret commonly observed language practices in Bangladeshi diplomatic journalism.

The study uses illustrative examples drawn from publicly recognizable patterns such as diplomatic press releases, journalistic rewriting practices, and institutional language norms. These examples are not treated as empirical evidence but as analytical tools to clarify theoretical arguments.

Analytical Discussion

This section uses illustrative examples to clarify how institutional practices, professional norms, and language ideologies shape the role of Bangla in specialized diplomatic reporting.

Source Text Dependency and the Constraint on Mother Language

One of the main structural factors shaping diplomatic journalism in Bangladesh is the language of the source text. Official press releases are usually prepared in English so they can be shared with foreign governments, international organizations, and global media. These documents are commonly written in a standardized diplomatic style shaped by international conventions.

As a result, Bangladeshi diplomatic journalists often depend on English-language texts as their primary source of information. When these texts are published in Bangla, journalists generally translate, summarize, or rewrite them rather than producing independent interpretations. For example, diplomatic expressions such as “strengthening bilateral cooperation,” “reaffirming mutual commitment,” or “enhancing regional stability” are commonly rephrased into Bangla while keeping the same abstract and formal structure. Although these translations communicate the intended meaning, they rarely include local explanations about how such diplomatic decisions affect ordinary citizens or national realities.

This process keeps the authority of the message connected to the original English source text, while Bangla performs a secondary role. From Bourdieu’s (1991) perspective, symbolic authority in

diplomatic journalism therefore remains tied to English rather than the mother language itself. Even when reports are written in Bangla, their vocabulary, structure, and framing largely originate from global diplomatic discourse. As a result, Bangla has limited ability to independently shape meaning within institutional journalism.

Professionalism and Linguistic Discipline in Diplomatic Journalism

Professional journalism norms also reinforce the limited position of mother language by associating authority with neutrality and objectivity. In Bangladeshi diplomatic journalism, Bangla is carefully controlled to appear serious, restrained, and credible. This creates a formal and standardized style that follows international professional norms while avoiding expressive or emotionally rich language.

This linguistic discipline is visible in news headlines and the reporting of official statements. Headlines often use generalized expressions such as “Bangladesh seeks stronger ties” (বাংলাদেশ সম্পর্ক সুদৃঢ়করণে আগ্রহী) instead of more culturally expressive or conversational language. Similarly, when political leaders speak in colloquial Bangla, journalists frequently reformulate those statements into formal expressions such as “reiterating the official position” (আনুষ্ঠানিক অবস্থান পুনর্ব্যক্ত করা). Fairclough (1995) argues that such standardized language appears objective and neutral while reproducing existing institutional power relations.

Another visible feature of this discipline is selective code-switching and transliteration. Terms such as “regional security” (রিজিয়নাল সিকিউরিটি), “carbon footprint” (কার্বন ফুটপ্রিন্ট), and “LDC graduation” (এলডিসি গ্রাজুয়েশন) often appear in Bangla reports without explanation. These English-derived terms function as markers of professionalism and global relevance. By using them, journalists signal their alignment with international diplomatic discourse and reinforce the idea that complex strategic concepts are more naturally expressed through English-based terminology.

As a result, Bangla is not excluded from diplomatic journalism,

but it is strictly regulated. Its legitimacy depends on how effectively it mirrors the structure and prestige of global English discourse.

Professionalism and Linguistic Discipline in Diplomatic Journalism

The preference for formalized and internationally aligned language may also reflect the practical demands of diplomatic reporting. Because diplomatic journalism deals with sensitive international issues, journalists often prioritize precision, neutrality, and terminological consistency over conversational accessibility. In this sense, linguistic discipline can be interpreted not only as institutional control but also as a professional strategy for avoiding ambiguity and maintaining credibility in global communication (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009).

Standard Language Ideology and the Hierarchy within Bangla

Standard language ideology also shapes the role of mother language in diplomatic journalism. This ideology promotes the belief that one standardized and refined variety of language is naturally more suitable for official communication than other forms (Lippi-Green, 1994). Media institutions reinforce this belief by consistently favoring standardized language in formal reporting.

Diplomatic journalism in Bangladesh mainly uses a highly standardized form of Bangla associated with education, urban professionalism, and institutional authority. In contrast, everyday spoken Bangla is largely absent from diplomatic reporting. This creates a linguistic hierarchy within Bangla itself.

For example, when people from border areas, migrant communities, or rural regions are quoted in reports related to labor migration or cross-border issues, their speech is often edited into standardized Bangla. Journalists justify this practice as necessary for clarity and professionalism. However, it also removes regional identity and linguistic diversity from the final report. Hasan and Rahaman (2014) argue that such practices reinforce the belief that only standardized language is suitable for authority and intelligence.

From Bourdieu's (1991) perspective, this can be understood as

symbolic violence, where dominant language norms are imposed as natural and unquestionable. By privileging one formal linguistic style, diplomatic journalism excludes many people from seeing their own language reflected in discussions of foreign policy. Consequently, Bangla becomes marginalized not only in relation to English but also within its own internal hierarchy.

Ceremonial visibility and strategic silence

The role of Bangla in diplomatic journalism also changes depending on the type of diplomatic event being reported. Bangla receives greater visibility in ceremonial and symbolic contexts, while its role becomes more limited in strategic or policy-oriented reporting.

For example, reports on International Mother Language Day, cultural exchange programs, or heritage diplomacy often allow journalists to use expressive and emotionally rich Bangla. In such contexts, Bangla is celebrated as a symbol of national identity, history, and cultural pride. In contrast, reports on trade negotiations, climate diplomacy, or multilateral summits usually maintain a restrained and standardized tone. In these cases, Bangla closely follows the structure of global diplomatic English. Cultural references are either minimized or included only as background information. This creates a clear division between symbolic visibility and strategic silence.

From Bourdieu’s (1991) theoretical perspective, this reflects the distinction between cultural capital and institutional legitimacy. Diplomatic journalism positions Bangla mainly within the emotional and ceremonial domain, while strategic diplomacy remains connected to globally standardized institutional language. This division limits the role of Bangla in shaping policy-oriented discourse and national image.

Context	Language Style	Role of Bangla
Cultural diplomacy	Expressive	Symbolic
Trade & security	Restrained	Rephrasing

Context	Language Style	Role of Bangla
International summits	Standardized	Controlled
Policy analysis	Abstract	Limited

Table 2. Contextual use of Bangla in diplomatic journalism

National Image Construction through Linguistic Discipline

Diplomatic journalism plays an important role in shaping how a nation is represented to both domestic and international audiences. Through careful language choice, news reports help construct an image of the country as stable, responsible, and aligned with global norms. This image is produced through restrained and standardized language. Reports on international summits and multilateral forums frequently use expressions such as “commitment to international cooperation” (আন্তর্জাতিক সহযোগিতার প্রতি অঙ্গীকার), “peaceful resolution” (শান্তিপূর্ণ নিষ্পত্তি), and “shared global responsibility” (যৌথ বৈশ্বিক দায়বদ্ধতা). According to Van Doorslaer (2012), journalistic rewriting and textual adaptation play an important role in constructing national image.

By selecting formal institutional language and avoiding emotional or locally grounded expressions, journalists present Bangladesh as calm, rational, and globally responsible. Linguistic discipline therefore becomes part of diplomatic image management. National credibility becomes associated with conformity to global diplomatic discourse rather than with linguistic authenticity.

Implications for Linguistic Sustainability

The limited role of mother language in diplomatic journalism has important implications for linguistic sustainability. Fishman (1991) argues that languages decline not only when people stop speaking them, but also when they lose access to prestigious institutional domains such as governance, science, and diplomacy.

Diplomatic journalism is one of the main domains through which new global ideas enter public discussion in Bangladesh. Concepts such as “Indo-Pacific Strategy,” “Blue Economy,” and “climate diplomacy”

are often introduced through diplomatic reporting. However, these concepts are usually presented through direct transliteration instead of fully developed Bangla alternatives. This practice strengthens the perception that Bangla is less capable of expressing complex international issues. Over time, this creates a cycle of dependency. Because Bangla is rarely used to independently explain advanced diplomatic concepts, it becomes viewed as unsuitable for such discussions. Because it is viewed as unsuitable, it continues to be excluded from these domains. This cycle limits the long-term functional development of mother language.

From a sustainability perspective, the issue is not linguistic weakness but institutional practice. Bangla has historically shown its ability to adapt and develop. However, without stronger institutional support in elite fields such as diplomatic journalism, its symbolic authority remains limited. Ensuring linguistic sustainability therefore requires reconsidering how mother language is positioned within institutional and policy-oriented communication.

Case study: LDC Graduation Discourse and the Institutional Position of Bangla in Diplomatic Journalism

This case study examines the article titled “অর্থনীতি বহুমুখীকরণের মাধ্যমে এলডিসি উত্তরণের চ্যালেঞ্জ মোকাবেলা সম্ভব” published in বর্ষিক বার্তা (Haq, 2025). The article discusses Bangladesh’s transition from Least Developed Country (LDC) status to developing-country status and demonstrates how Bangla functions within diplomatic-economic journalism through institutional legitimacy, professional norms, and globally dominant policy discourse.

The article strongly reflects Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic capital. According to Bourdieu (1991), language gains authority because institutions recognize it as legitimate. In this article, Bangla is the language of communication, but authority comes mainly from internationally recognized institutions and frameworks such as “জাতিসংঘের উন্নয়ন নীতি কমিটি,” “বিশ্ব বাণিজ্য সংস্থা (ডব্লিউটিও),” and “ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়ন”. Bangladesh’s development is explained through

internationally approved indicators including “মাথাপিছু আয়,” “মানব উন্নয়ন সূচক,” and “অর্থনৈতিক ও পরিবেশগত দুর্বলতা.” Development is therefore presented as a globally regulated process rather than a culturally interpreted national achievement. The article also reflects Bourdieu’s idea of diplomatic journalism as a specialized linguistic field where professional legitimacy depends on recognized institutional language. The Bangla used throughout the article is highly formal, administrative, and policy-oriented. Expressions such as “অর্থনীতি বহুমুখীকরণ,” “রফতানি পণ্য বৈচিত্র্যকরণ,” “উদার বাণিজ্য নীতি প্রণয়ন,” “বৈদেশিক শ্রমবাজার সম্প্রসারণ,” and “দক্ষ মানবসম্পদ তৈরি” belong to an elite bureaucratic register associated with diplomatic communication.

The article avoids colloquial or emotionally grounded expressions suitable for ordinary readers. This demonstrates how diplomatic journalism disciplines language according to institutional expectations and professional norms. For example, instead of “অর্থনীতি বহুমুখীকরণ,” the article could have written “একই পণ্যেও ওপর নির্ভর না করে নতুন নতুন খাতে আয় বাড়ানো”. Similarly, “রফতানি পণ্য বৈচিত্র্যকরণ” could have been written as “শুধু পোশাক নয়, অন্যান্য পণ্যও বিদেশে বিক্রি করতে হবে,” while “বৈদেশিক শ্রমবাজার সম্প্রসারণ” could have been simplified as “বিদেশে আরও বেশি মানুষের কাজের সুযোগ তৈরি করতে হবে”. Likewise, “উদার বাণিজ্য নীতি প্রণয়ন” could have appeared as “বিদেশের সঙ্গে ব্যবসা করার নিয়ম সহজ করতে হবে”. The same pattern appears in discussions of economic risks and opportunities. The article uses “রফতানি আয় কমে যাওয়ার আশঙ্কা রয়েছে,” whereas a more people-centered version could have been “এলডিসি সুবিধা চলে গেলে দেশের ব্যবসা ও মানুষের আয় ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হতে পারে”. Instead of “বিদেশি বিনিয়োগকারীদেও আস্থা বাড়বে,” it could have written “বিদেশিরা বাংলাদেশে ব্যবসা করতে বেশি আগ্রহী হবে”. Technical terms such as “অর্থনৈতিক ভঙ্গুরতার সূচক” could also have been explained as “দেশের অর্থনীতি কতটা ঝুঁকির মধ্যে আছে তার হিসাব.” Similarly, “রিজিওনাল কানেক্টিভিটি” could have been replaced with “পাশের দেশগুলোর সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ ও ব্যবসা বাড়ানো”. However, the article deliberately prefers institutional vocabulary because it creates an image of expertise, neutrality, and professionalism.

These examples support the theory of Standard Language Ideology discussed by Lippi-Green (1994) and Fairclough (1995). Media institutions establish one standardized language variety as objective

and credible while marginalizing conversational forms. Even when discussing export dependency, foreign debt, or unemployment, the article maintains technical expressions such as *কর-জিডিপি অনুপাত*, “*শুল্কমুক্ত সুবিধা*,” and “*স্বল্প সুদে বৈদেশিক ঋণ*”. Through this linguistic discipline, Bangla is reshaped into a professionalized language suitable for elite diplomatic journalism. The article also reflects Van Doorslaer’s (2012) theory of translation and transediting through its use of transliterated global policy terms such as “*স্মুথ ট্রানজিশন স্ট্র্যাটেজি (এসটিএস)*,” “*ট্রিপস চুক্তি*,” “*জিএসপি প্লাস*,” “*ইকোনমিক পার্টনারশিপ এগ্রিমেন্ট (ইপিএ)*,” “*রিজিওনাল কম্প্রিহেনসিভ ইকোনমিক পার্টনারশিপ (আরসিইপি)*,” and “*এনহ্যান্সড ইন্টিগ্রেটেড ফ্রেমওয়ার্ক (ইআইএফ)*”. Although written in Bangla script, these concepts remain structurally dependent on English-language global policy discourse. Bangla therefore functions mainly as a language of institutional transmission rather than an independently interpretive language.

Recommendations

Although this study is theoretical, it offers several recommendations regarding language use in diplomatic journalism. Media institutions and journalists should recognize that language is not simply a technical tool but also a form of symbolic authority (Bourdieu, 1991). Greater awareness of this issue may encourage more meaningful use of mother language beyond ceremonial or symbolic contexts. Diplomatic journalism should create more space for accessible Bangla in analytical and policy-oriented reporting. This does not mean abandoning professionalism or neutrality. Rather, complex diplomatic and economic issues can be explained in clearer and more reader-friendly Bangla without losing credibility. As Fairclough (1995) argues, dominant language norms are socially constructed and can be reshaped through reflective practice.

Besides, greater attention should be given to developing Bangla equivalents for emerging global concepts. Excessive dependence on untranslated English terminology limits the conceptual growth of Bangla in institutional communication. Expanding Bangla terminology in diplomacy, trade, and global governance can strengthen its functional range and symbolic authority (Fishman, 1991).

Future studies may explore diplomatic journalism through empirical methods such as discourse analysis, newsroom observation, or audience research. Such research could provide deeper understanding of how journalists negotiate language choice and how readers interpret diplomatic news in mother language.

Conclusion

This study examined the position of mother language in diplomatic journalism using Bangladesh as an illustrative context. Drawing on theories of symbolic capital, journalism professionalism, standard language ideology, and news translation, the study shows that the limited authority of Bangla in diplomatic journalism is shaped by institutional practices, professional norms, and dependence on English-language global discourse. Although Bangla possesses strong cultural and historical importance in Bangladesh, this symbolic value does not automatically translate into institutional authority within diplomatic journalism. The field continues to privilege restrained, standardized, and internationally recognizable language forms. As a result, Bangla is often limited to translation, adaptation, or symbolic representation rather than independent interpretive authority.

At the same time, the preference for standardized and internationally aligned language may also reflect the practical demands of diplomatic journalism, where precision, neutrality, and terminological consistency are professionally important (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009). Nevertheless, the study argues that excessive dependence on externally dominant discourse can restrict the development of Bangla as a language of complex global communication.

By treating language as symbolic power rather than a neutral medium, this study contributes to discussions on language, media, and sustainability. It argues that ensuring the meaningful presence of mother language in institutional journalism is important not only for cultural representation but also for inclusive and sustainable public communication.

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A Comparative Study of Chinese and Bengali Interrogative Sentences

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Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History</i> Date of Submission 17-02-2026 Date of Acceptance 06-05-2026 Date of Publication 15-06-2026 <i>Keywords</i> Compare, Chinese, Bengali, Interrogative Sentences	This paper conducts a comparative analysis of the interrogative sentence structure in the Chinese language and the Bengali language which are the Sino-Tibetan and the Indo-European language families respectively. The paper focuses on syntactic, morphological, and pragmatic properties of the three major types of interrogatives, namely yes-no questions, WH-questions, and alternative questions. It is found that Chinese interrogatives are predominantly constructed using sentence final particles (e.g., <i>ma</i>), A-not-A structures, and in-situ WH-words. Bengali, by contrast, often puts the elements of interrogation in the sentence-initial position and is a morphologically rich, inflexible system. Genetically, the two languages are unrelated, but both languages use systematic and rule-based methods of forming questions. Significant variation is observed in the distribution of WH-elements, the distribution of sentence-final particles in the Chinese language, and the extent of verbal inflexion in the Bengali language. There are also pragmatic differences that can be

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observed, especially in politeness strategies and social relations encoding. The paper has shown that, irrespective of the structural divergence, both of the languages overlap in the communicative purpose of seeking information functionally. The results offer some useful theoretical insights and pedagogical recommendations to contrastive linguistics and second language learning.

Introduction

An interrogative sentence is a sentence that asks a question (Youn & Meng, 2015). This form of sentence is regarded as one of the most frequent and important sentence types, thereby necessitating a detailed study of its structure. The emphasis on interrogatives stems from their pervasive use and their significant role in the construction of meaning within any language. A systematic comparison of interrogatives across languages reveals both the complexities and uniformities in their grammatical organization. The Bengali language belongs to the Indo-European language family (Chatterji, 1926). So, Chinese and Bengali represent two distant geographical and linguistic areas—Sino-Tibetan and Indo-European, respectively. However, the total grammar of interrogatives of both languages is still not extensively studied and compared (Chen, 2015). The volume of available grammatical data on Chinese interrogatives is conspicuously higher than that of the Bengali language in all relevant sources. The contrastive study of interrogative sentences in Chinese and Bengali is of particular interest, since both languages widely lack morphological marking on interrogatives. Interrogatives, rather, are commonly marked by specific interrogative syntactic structures/expressions and/or interrogative words. Among the several types of interrogative sentences, cross-linguistically, yes–no interrogatives, *wh*–interrogatives, and alternative interrogatives are the most frequently attested instances, which are the focus of the present study. A preliminary comparison of the entire grammar of interrogatives of these two unrelated languages can significantly contribute to an understanding of the universal principles and possible organization of human language.

Literature Review and Identification of Research Problem

Numerous studies have explored the syntactic constraints of WH-questions in Mandarin Chinese, but relatively fewer on comparatives interrogative sentences. Studies classify Mandarin interrogatives into four or five main categories, such as particle questions with *ma*, A-not-A questions, interrogative pronoun questions and alternative questions (Elliott, 1965; Li, 2008; Nwamaka, 2016). Symonds (2007) points out that locative and motion prepositions must come before the main verb in declarative sentences, such as in 我今天在校园里吃午餐 (I today on campus eat lunch). When these declarative sentences are converted to WH-questions, the WH word usually stays in place (e.g. While both English and Chinese have a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) word order, Chinese is less rigid and more context dependent than English. This can pose a challenge for English speakers who are learning Chinese WH-questions because English requires Subject-Auxiliary Inversion, Do-support and WH-movement, none of which are found in Chinese (Youn & Meng, 2015). Consequently, the cross-linguistic difference in syntax of WH-questions should be highlighted and teaching strategies that align with the natural syntax of Chinese should be employed (Jiang et al., 2019). For instance, Subject-Auxiliary Inversion can be introduced initially, then comparisons made between various WH-words (e.g., *who*, *whose*, etc.) to illustrate the WH-fronting transformation that occurs in English but not Chinese. WH-sentence formation can then be taught using a communicative approach that offers natural language input and practice.

Little work exists on interrogative sentences in Chinese and Bengali, despite extensive study of interrogative sentences in English and some research on interrogative words in Chinese and Bengali (Kao et al., 2010; Chen, 2015). Bengali is a typologically different language, having a basic SOV (Subject-Object-Verb) word order while Mandarin and English use SVO (Hossain, 2018; Nwamaka, 2016). Because of different typological features of these two languages, investigating this neglected area is valuable. Unlike English, Bengali does not have the auxiliary verbs, so learners may use the particle *ki*

to mark polar questions from statements (Karim, 2006). This particle *ki* is complex and functions both as a polar question marker and an interrogative disjunction morpheme that denotes alternatives in the answer space (Guha, 2022). A theoretical framework builds on interrogative-related knowledge in Chinese and the author's insights into Bengali interrogatives.

Research Objectives and Research Questions

The main purpose of the study is to conduct a systematic study of the structure of the interrogative sentences in Chinese and Bengali. To be more specific, the paper discusses the structural composition of the interrogative sentences in both languages, recognizes and discusses the parallels and differences between Chinese and Bengali as regards to the interrogative constructions and contribute to the field of comparative linguistics by offering some valuable insights. Since there is not much comparative theoretical analysis of Interrogative-question formation in the two languages, thus the study addresses this gap by posing the following research questions:

- (1) What are the distinctive characteristics of the formation of interrogative sentences in Chinese and Bengali?
- (2) What major similarities and differences exist in the formation of interrogative sentences between Chinese and Bengali?

Methodology

In this study, the methodology is aimed to make systematic-rules-based comparison of two language families, which are genetically different Sino-Tibetan (Chinese) and Indo-European (Bengali). The study uses a methodology called “Transformational Grammar” which has been used in the analysis of interrogatives in Chinese and English, and has been effective in analyzing interrogatives in these languages. In this way, the researchers can study the apparent surface structures of questions and the deep structures which underlie them and are used to create questions. To have a solid analysis, the study also compiled Sentences from academic journals (from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure, CNKI), and printed publications and books

were also used to supplement these in both Chinese and Bengali to form a comprehensive corpus for analysis. The syntactic, morphological and pragmatic characteristics of three main interrogative categories: yes/no questions, WH-questions and alternative questions. The analysis follows the same line as the previous one, by comparing structural formulas, word order (SVO for Chinese vs. SOV for Bengali) and particles.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a theoretical approach that incorporates several linguistic models to explain the similarities and differences in information search strategies of the two languages. It adopts the Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar Model to do research on the syntactic mechanism of the Chinese interrogatives, focusing on the formation of wh-question and the scope-taking of interrogative expressions, which can be regarded as variable operators bound by higher functional projections. Theoretically, interrogative sentences are root interrogatives, that is, sentences that are formed by using interrogative operators in the root position of a sentence. A key part of this is the typological difference between the languages, which makes Chinese and Bengali in-situ languages but English a WH-fronting language. The framework also defines direct and indirect interrogatives, and sub-categorizes the direct interrogatives into general, alternative, and special (WH) interrogatives depending on the type of information they ask for. Furthermore, the morphology of Chinese is very simple, while Bengali has very rich morphology and stems are extensively suffixated to mark tense, person, mood, and case. Finally, the study uses a three-level model of structuring politeness strategies at the lexical, syntactic and discourse level to analyse pragmatic differences and the encoding of social relations.

Interrogative Sentence Structures

According to the norms and rules and the transformation principle of sentences, this part discusses the structures of both types of interrogative sentences of Chinese and Bengali. Yes-no questions are

known as alternative questions or choice questions (Jiang et al., 2019). If a response is recoverable from one alternative by negating the other, the question functions perfectly as an interrogative sentence requiring an answer from an alternative (Youn & Meng, 2015).

Structures of Chinese yes-no questions: According to, yes-no questions in Chinese are normally formed with the experimental particle *ma* (吗). For instance: *Nǐ shì xuéshēng ma?* (你是学生吗? ‘Are you a student?’). The other frequent pattern is the A-not-A pattern, where the predicate is repeated in affirmative and negative forms, as in *Nǐ shì bú shì xuéshēng?* (你是不是学生? ‘Are you or aren’t you a student?’). One of the most commonly used interrogative patterns in Mandarin Chinese is the reduplicative or contrastive pattern that is achieved by the use of the A-not-A construction. In this pattern, the word used could be verbs or adjectives which are repeated in positive and negative form, e.g. *hao bao?* (good or not good?) and *qù bù qù?* (去不去? ‘go or not go?’). This form produces a dual option and is a strong indicator of interrogation. It is worth mentioning that the A-not-A construction is a morpho-syntactic interrogative type of construction, not a tag question. Also the Chinese yes no questions may be constructed without using the particle *ma* (吗). In these instances interrogativity can be expressed by inclusion of interrogative words such as *shenme* (什么 ‘what’) or *zenmeyang* (怎么样 how/what about) that may be incorporated in a sentence depending on the context of the sentence.

Structure of Bengali yes-no questions: Yes-no questions are formed with the postposition */-ki /* (কি) or according to the context of the sentences. These questions can be in the marked or unmarked form. The unmarked form only uses intonation to mark a interrogative, as in: *তুমি কি স্কুলে যাবে?* (‘Will you go to school?’). The marked form, however, expressly involves the interrogative particle *ki* (কি) i.e. the particle usually appears after the subject, or before the predicate, such as: *তুমি কি স্কুলে যাবে?* (Are you going to school?). Also, the Bengali language may convey alternative-type interrogatives with the help of such structures as *ভালো কি মন্দ?* (‘good or bad?’) and *যাবে কি যাবে না?* The opposing selections in (will you go or not) that are comparable

in purpose to Chinese A-not-A constructions. Thus, Bengali yes-no questions are constructed both syntactically (with the help of *ki*) and prosodically (intonation), so the form of interrogatives can be formed flexibly and, at the same time, the meaning of the question should be clear.

Table 1: Yes–No Interrogative Structures

Feature	Bengali	Chinese (Mandarin)
Basic Word Order	SOV	SVO
Primary Marker	Particle কি (ki) (optional)	Sentence-final particle 吗 (ma)
Structural Formula	S + (কি) + O + V	S + V + O + 吗
Intonation-only Form	Common	Rare
A-not-A Form	No equivalent structure	Yes (e.g., 喜不喜欢)
Example	তুমি কি স্কুলে যাবে? tumi ki skul-e jabe? “Will you go to school?”	你去学校吗? nǐ qù xuéxiào ma? “Are you going to school?”
Without Particle	তুমি স্কুলে যাবে? (intonation only)	Not standard
Response Pattern	Flexible	Must match polarity

Interrogative sentences related to WH-questions: WH-questions are known as content question, special question, or constituent question. In WH-questions, there are WH-words called interrogative or Wh-words. There are six interrogative words in English: 1. What (things or ideas) 2. Where (place) 3. Who (person) 4. When (time) 5. Which (specific person, place, or thing) 6. Why (reason or aim)

Structures of Chinese WH-questions: The WH-questions in Mandarin can be structurally more complex because the interrogative clause can be the embedded clause. The WH-clause in Chinese has five varieties: a) Pronoun (谁, 她, 什么国际) b) NP (中华人民共和国, 谁, 什么玩具) c) A(多少铅笔) d) QNP(多少单词) e) QPP(从什么时候).

Structure of Bengali WH-questions: A WH-question word is an interrogative pronoun or adverb. The question word is sometimes

called a “Wh-word” or an “interrogative word”. The question words in Bengali are different from those in Chinese. In Chinese, WH-words tend to only be a one-character word, mainly monosyllabic monosyllables. However, the Bengali WH-words tend to be a multiple-syllable, rather than single syllable. Such as the word “how many” is “kotoTa” (কতটা) in Bengali.

Table 2: WH-Question Structures

Feature	Bengali	Chinese (Mandarin)
WH Position	Typically sentence-initial (with scrambling)	In situ
WH Movement	Allows fronting but base SOV	No overt movement
Multiple WH	Restricted	Allowed
Structural Formula	WH + S + O + V	S + WH + V + O
Subject WH Example	কে এসেছে? ke esheche? “Who has come?”	谁来了? shéi lái le? “Who came?”
Object WH Example	কাকে তুমি দেখেছো? kake tumi dekhecho? “Whom did you see?”	你看见谁? nǐ kànjiàn shéi? “Whom did you see?”
WH + Particle Combination	No conflict	Rare (WH + 吗 unacceptable)

Chinese Interrogative Structures

Besides the common Ascription Interrogative sentence, Chinese also possesses various other sentence-type interrogatives, distinguished by their formation methods. Firstly, Interrogative sentences of alternative choice are constructed by enumerating options, usually two, connected with a conjunction such as 还是 háishi ‘or’. For example:

- 1) 她是中国人还是美国人? (tā shì Zhōngguó rén háishi Měiguó rén?) she is Chinese or American. Secondly, Interrogative sentences with interrogative pronouns as complements use WH-words as the complements of predicates, enabling them to ask questions about the object;

- 2) 你认识谁? (Nǐ rènshi shéi?) you know who Here, the predicate 认识 *rènshi* ‘know’ is followed by the interrogative pronoun 谁 *shéi* ‘who’. When these interrogative pronouns serve as the complement of an object-related verb, the sentence becomes an object-interrogative one. Thirdly, to inquire about the reason for an action, the interrogative 为什么 *wèishénme* ‘why’ functions as an adverbial specifying cause;
- 3) 她为什么生气? (Tā wèishénme shēngqì?) she why angry Fourthly, Interrogative sentences with reduplicated interrogative pronouns, such as 谁谁 or 什么什么, not only function as interrogative pronouns but also emphasize repetition in the question;
- 4) 他看见什么了吗? (Tā kànjiàn shénme le ma?) he see-PFV what Q ‘Did he see anything?’ / ‘What did he see?’ Finally, interrogative sentences with the sentence-final particle *ne* (呢) are frequently used to ask the same question back to the addressee or to ask about a related situation to a previous statement or common ground. Examples include;
- 5) 他也要走了, 你呢? (Tā yě yào zǒu le, nǐ ne?) he also will leave? you ? In summary, Chinese interrogative structures are diverse, employing specific strategies to convey different types of questions (Jiang et al., 2019); (Youn & Meng, 2015).

Bengali Interrogative Structures

Bengali interrogative structures are typically formed by adding an interrogative particle or question tag at the end of a declarative sentence (Beames, 1891). Five interrogative particles—which can also function as question tags—are commonly used: কেন (*kenô*, “why”), কি (*ki*, “what”/“whether”), কি-না (*ki-na*, “whether”), কি (*kii*, “how much”/“how many”), and কত (*kotô*, “how much”/“how many”). For yes/no questions, the particle কি (*ki*) is generally placed at the end, although dropping the particle is also acceptable in Bengali. The choice of interrogative particle influences the sentence’s expressiveness; for example, কি (*kii*) and কত (*kotô*) convey a stronger sense of curiosity when questioning quantity or extent (Choudhury & Kaiser, 2012).

Interrogative pronouns do not occur in the sentence-final position but appear in situ. Beyond the typical yes/no interrogative sentence, Bengali has a number of other types of sentence interrogatives, which differ in sentence formation. Firstly, yes/no interrogative sentences are typically formed by appending an interrogative marker, কি ki, to the declarative sentence (but more often in colloquial usage the particle is dropped). For example:

- 1) সে কি ছাত্র?
 (Se ki châtôr ?)
 he Q student ?
 'Is he a student?'

Secondly, interrogative sentences with interrogative pronouns have WH-words used in their natural positions (in-situ), rather than at the front of the sentence. They can refer to people, things, places or time. For example:

- 2) তুমি কাকে চেনো?
 (Tumi kâkê chenô?)
 you whom know
 'Whom do you know?'

In this sentence, the interrogative pronoun কাকে kâkê 'whom' is the object of the verb চেনো chenô 'know'.

Thirdly, to ask about the cause of an action or situation, the interrogative কেন kenô 'why' is used, usually preordered before the verb phrase. For example:

- 3) সে কেন রাগ করেছে?
 (Se kenô râg kôrechê?)
 he why angry has.done
 'Why is he angry?' / 'Why did he become angry?'

Fourthly, interrogative sentences that express quantity, amount, degree or degree of comparison are formed with words like কত kotô 'how much/how many' or কয়টি kôyti 'how many (countable)'. For example:

- 4) তোমার কত বই আছে?
 (Your how many book exist)

how many book you have

‘How many books do you have?’

Fifthly, disjunctive interrogative sentences are formed by offering two or more alternatives, usually joined by For example:

5) তুমি চা নাকি কফি খাবে?

(Tumi chā nāki kôfi khābē?)

you tea or coffee will.drink

‘Would you like tea or coffee?’

Lastly, Bengali employs sentence-final tags or echo questions to express affirmation or to respond to a previous assertion. For example:

6) আমি যাবো, তুমি যাবে তো?

(Āmi jābô, tumi jābē tō?)

I will. go you will. go TAG

I will go; you will go too, right?’

To conclude, Bengali has a wide range of interrogative structures, using particles, interrogative pronouns, quantity words, disjunctive choice and question tags to convey diverse meanings. In Bengali, unlike English, WH-elements are generally in situ, and interrogatives mostly retain the basic subject–object–verb (SOV) word order (Choudhury & Kaiser, 2012).

Types of Interrogative Sentences

Indirect or direct information is obtained using interrogative sentences. They are divided into direct and indirect interrogative sentences based on the kind of information that is sought. Direct interrogative sentences are sentences that ask questions aiming at solicitation of the answer, on the contrary, indirect interrogative sentences aim at getting the information, supplying or presupposing an answer. There are additional subcategorizations of direct interrogatives which are general, alternative and special questions. General questions ask whether the fact is true or not. Alternative questions are multiple-choice questions and require one to make a choice. Special questions are those which are aimed at finding certain information on manner, time, place, reason, method or specification. Indirect interrogatives

are answered indirectly and may include content clauses (subject, object, reason, time, location, manner, or specifications) based on the information that is being sought (Telhaj,2016).

Yes-No Questions

Yes-no questions are polar questions that would take either no or yes as responses. They tend to use auxiliaries such as do/does or conjunction such as or. Polar interrogativity in the Chinese language is syntactically expressed. A pragmatic theory of polar questions offers a system of categorization of polar questions in the parse trees and distinguishes between them as yes-no questions and alternative questions (Levinson, 2010; Youn and Meng, 2015).

Wh-Questions

The typological difference between the use of WH-questions in Bengali and Mandarin Chinese is that some languages preserve Wh-words in situ (Chinese and Bengali) whereas others, such as English, must have Wh-fronting. In English, the movement of WH-phrases takes place into the sentence-initial position (Spec-CP) with Subject-Auxiliary inversion and do-support. In Chinese, there is no need to have such movement, inversion, and do-support (Youn & Meng, 2015). The position of Standard Mandarin WH-words does not normally change, and it is only in the restricted formulaic occasions when the WH-word is used as a discourse marker that they are fronted. Although both languages possess WH-questions, their syntactic frame is different, which usually can cause problems to people with their first language permitting fronting of WH. The use of explicit grammar explanation and systematic, communicational practice to strengthen the acquisition of WH-questions should be the focus of effective teaching that places an emphasis on the cross-linguistic differences between languages.

Alternative Questions

Alternative questions appear when a choice must be made and are characterized by the presence of alternatives (Telhaj,2016). Based on alternatives, there are two kinds of alternative interrogative sentences:

those in which alternative options appear explicitly as disjunctive options connected with *apo* or *a*, and polar alternative questions that can be answered with a positive or negative reply. Polar alternative questions are also called comprehensive or general questions when the speaker seeks to verify or strengthen knowledge and may or may not have the interrogative form. They function like “yes/no questions.” Polarity expressed by negative particles should not be confused with the semantic polarity of the answer: both affirmative and negative polar questions can be answered with “yes” or “no”.

Table 3: Alternative (Choice-Based) Questions

Feature	Bengali	Chinese (Mandarin)
Connector	না (na)	还是 (háishi)
Structural Formula	Option A + না + Option B	Option A + 还是 + Option B
Final Particle Needed?	No	No
Example	তুমি চা নাকি কফি খাবে? “Will you drink tea or coffee?”	她是中国人还是美国人? “Is she Chinese or American?”
Interpretation	Forced choice	Forced choice
A-not-A Alternative	No equivalent	Yes (喜欢不喜欢)
Reduplicative/ Contrastive Form	বে কি যাবে না?	去不去?

Morphological Aspects

Some languages use overt morphology to indicate sentence mood, including interrogative mood. Chinese uses the sentence-final question particle *ma* (吗) to mark interrogative mood, as in *nǐ xǐhuān tāma?* (你喜欢他吗? ; “Do you like him?”). Morphological marking of interrogatives in Bengali is not used; rather, it is based on the word order and intonation. Interrogative marking differs cross-linguistically: Polish has it clause-initially, Chinese clause-finally and German fronts the finite verb (Kao et al., 2010). WH-words are not themselves interrogative.” “Neither WH-words nor yes-no Q-particles

can be characterized as ‘interrogative pronouns’.” “It is thus the elements in the head of the CP that mark a clause as interrogative.” Mandarin indicates polar interrogatives by a sentence-final particle; Bengali polarity remains unmarked. Bengali polar questions resemble Mandarin A-not-A constructions. The interrogative character of WH-words is not a lexical semantic property, but is determined by the type of phrase in which a WH-word occurs. WH-words always introduce entities from a particular conceptual domain: person, time, place, reason, manner, manner of death, manner of humiliation, reason of waiting, manner of voting, etc. WH-words thus contribute to the semantic representation of a clause by restricting the interpretation of the questioned element as an entity of a certain domain (Wiese, 2010).

Chinese has simple morphology, i.e., the principles that govern the internal structure of words (Youn & Meng, 2015). The morphology of a language consists of morphology-phonology (sounds of the units), morphology-syntax (the relation between the morpheme and syntax), and morphology-semantics [the meaning of the units] (Wiese, 2010). The principle that governs the internal structure of words is called morphology. The internal structure of words can be characterized as the presence of morphemes and the relation between the morphemes inside the word itself with morphology followed by phonology, syntax, and semantics.

In contrast, Bengali is a highly inflectional language with a fusional type of morphology. It is an agglutinating language predominantly characterized by suffixation, where stems undergo extensive inflection to indicate number, tense, person, mood, and case. The majority of nouns end in vowels and take suffixes to form the plural, oblique case, and the definite form. Personal pronouns are inflected for number and case but not for gender. In addition to suffixes, some nouns use stem changes to mark the plural and evoke a more formal style. The verbal system is more complicated; verbal endings include markers for tense, aspect, mood, person, and number. Bangla verbs undergo inflections based on person and number, following these four simple rules: (1) In the verbal complex, the tense/aspect/mood system always follows the personal ending; (2) There can only be one personal ending per verbal

complex; (3) A verbal complex must end in either a verb root or one of the valid personal endings; and (4) Informed by contextual and/or pragmatic information, only a subset of the personal endings can co-occur within the same verbal complex (Choudhury & Kaiser, 2012).

Table 4: Morphological Marking of Interrogatives

Feature	Bengali	Chinese (Mandarin)
Inflectional Morphology	Rich inflection	Minimal
Question Marking	Particle + inflection	Particle-based
Verb Agreement	Person/tense marking	No person marking
Word Ending Change	Yes (tense/person suffixes)	No
Example Verb	যাবে (jabe – future suffix)	去 (qù)
Interrogative Mood	Mostly syntactic + intonation	Marked by particle

Syntactic Structures

The syntactic investigation of Chinese interrogative constructions reveals a framework consistent with the Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar Model (Youn & Meng, 2015). This framework accounts for both the diverse interrogative types present in Mandarin and the intricate wh-question formation and scope-taking mechanisms. Interrogative expressions serve as variable operators that bind constituents and are subject to quantification by higher functional projections. The Unlike English, Chinese interrogatives are constructed without auxiliary verbs, subject-auxiliary inversion, or do-support. English interrogative sentences must always include the inversion of an auxiliary verb and the subject, as “you are going to School.” becomes “Are you going to School? ”. If there is no auxiliary verb, “do” is added to make the sentence grammatically correct, for example, “you go to School.” becomes “Do you go to School? ”, Unlike English, there are no such requirements in Chinese interrogative constructions Chinese interrogative sentences can be formed by utilizing question particles, inversion, or A-not-A constructions:

Inversion: Chinese does not typically employ Subject-verb inversion to form interrogative sentences or questions. For example, “你去学校” (You go to school) becomes “你去学校吗” (Do you go to school?) by adding the sentence-final particle *ma* (吗) rather than by changing the word order.

Question particles: Add *shenme*, *ma*, *ne*, etc., to the statement, as “你要去学校。” (You want to go to school) becomes “你要去学校吗?” (Do you want to go to school?)

A-not-A: use A-not-A construction, as “你喜欢他。” (you like him) becomes “你不喜欢他吗?” (you not like him)

wh-Word questions have a similar syntax, as they are extracted out of the sentence to the front with no indication of wh-movement, for example, “你去哪里?” (you go where?) and “你什么时候去?” (you what-time go?). If “你什么时候去?” is translated as a Wh-phrase question, the sentence cannot be grammatical in English. If it is a Wh-adverbial question, it is an interrogative adverbial phrase referring to time, so the sentence is grammatical (Wiese, 2010). Both languages use interrogative pronouns for wh-questions, such as “谁” (*shuí*, “who”) and “什么” (*shénme*, “what”). The syntactic structures do not map directly, however, and each language utilizes a different syntactic pattern in forming interrogative sentences. Not all interrogative pronouns are identical in syntactic structure, as some do not allow movement to the beginning of a sentence. In Chinese, many wh-elements cannot be linked to any phrase solely because they function as adverbs, rather than pronouns. The same considerations apply to Bengali as some wh-particles function adverbially rather than as interrogative pronouns. Moreover, a finite verb of Bangla selects three arguments: one subject, one indirect object, and one direct object. Subjects are not necessarily assigned the nominative Case. Case assignment in Bangla is both lexical and structural. Diathesis alternation is fairly limited in Bangla, and the causative alternation is not very productive (Choudhury & Kaiser, 2012).

Pragmatic Considerations

In Chinese, the particle *ma* is generally used in yes/no questions, whereas a sentence containing a WH-word can serve assorted communicative goals (Chen, 2015). According to the interrogative specification given in Wiese (2010), a sentence containing a WH-word is classified as interrogative only if it also contains an element that marks the clause as interrogative, such as *ma*. Pragmatically, it is odd to pose a sentence containing both a WH-word and *ma*. Thus, the difference in the combination of sentence-final particles with WH-words is grounded in the distinction between interrogative and non-interrogative sentences. In Bengali, ranged clarifications of either apparel or footwear will typically be presented on the base of a question, but such questions will not be posed either. It is only in Bengali that a bald, direct question will be put, instead of an understated and limited request for elaboration (Jiang et al., 2019). The raise of a ranged clarification in reply to an apparent non-ranged inquiry is an instance of a one-sided repair initiation. That is, the questioner, instead of requiring an answer from the addressee, takes the responsibility of clarifying the issue on her own. The explanation for the restriction of ranged clarifications to statements is equally pragmatic. Interrogative sentences play a significant role in expressing politeness strategies within communication. They influence the interpersonal relationship between the speaker and the hearer, essentially reflecting the speaker's attitude. In Chinese, for instance, interrogative sentences are common tools used to soften commands, convert compliments into polite disagreements, or incorporate softeners such as “是不是 (*shì bù shì*)” and “好吗 (*hǎo ma*)” at the end of sentences to temper the tenor of requests and questions ((Indah) Eftanastarini, 2025). This suggests that the power and status differential between interlocutors has a substantial impact on sentence formation in Chinese; speakers of equal status typically use direct yes-no questions (e.g., “去吗?” [Are you going?]) whereas those of lower status generally prefer tag questions, such as “去, 是吗?”. Although some researchers have proposed models to explain these distinctions, most have failed to accommodate data from diverse languages (Kumar & Nath Jha, 2021). Instead, a

structural model of politeness has been advanced, comprising three interconnected levels of operation: the lexical, involving specific polite words; the syntactic, concerning sentence structure; and the pragmatic/discourse, where politeness is context-dependent and the same utterance may be either polite or impolite depending on the situation. Evidence from the language pair Hindi-English illustrates how politeness strategies can be encoded at the lexical and syntactic levels.

Table 5: Pragmatic & Politeness Strategies

Feature	Bengali	Chinese (Mandarin)
Softening Strategy	Honorific verb forms	Sentence-final particles (吗, 呢)
Tag-like Softeners	না কি (na ki)	是不是 (shì bù shì), 好吗 (hǎo ma)
Social Hierarchy Influence	Moderate	Strong
Direct Yes–No	Common	Used among equals
Indirect Polite Question	আপনি কি যাবেন? (honorific form)	去吗? vs 去, 是吗?
Politeness Encoding	Morphological + lexical	Lexical + syntactic

Discussion and Comparative Analysis

In both English and Bengali, some elements are obligatorily fronted in interrogative sentences, at least from the perspective of Modern Generative Grammar. However, these two languages differ in the choice of the fronted elements and the constraints that regulate the movement. English employs a comprehensive set of specific interrogative words to stand for the unknown constituents, including varied categories like noun phrases (who, whom, what), prepositional phrases (where, when), and adverbial modifiers (why, how much, how long). Correspondingly, the syntactic rules and constraints governing the movement of these interrogative phrases are well-defined within the framework of Modern Generative Grammar (Youn & Meng, 2015). Conversely, Bengali uses only a limited set of interrogative

words, predominantly noun phrases; words representing prepositional phrases or adverbial clauses do not form corresponding interrogative expressions. This restriction poses challenges in the analysis of information-seeking interrogatives in Bengali for theories that rely heavily on the principle of *wh*-movement, such as Modern Generative Grammar (Chen, 2015). When confronted with an interrogative sentence, English speakers readily identify the moved *wh*-phrase, even without the realization of *wh*-movement as a linguistic rule. In contrast, the identification of the moved element in Bengali interrogative sentences is less straightforward. This difficulty, coupled with the limited inventory of interrogative words, suggests a need to reconsider the syntax of Bengali questioning within the generative framework (Jiang et al., 2019).

Further contrast arises when considering semantically open interrogative pronouns, where the two languages exhibit opposite preferences in the selection of indefinite pronouns for *wh*-blanks. In English, concepts like “problem” and “thing” correlate with “what,” while “place” and “time” typically relate to “where” or “when.” Bengali reverses these associations: words corresponding to “problem” or “thing” tend to connect with the interrogative pronoun equivalent to “which,” whereas “place” or “time” associates with that analogous to “what.” Both sets of pairings logically accord with their respective language-specific lexical selections and do not impact the *wh*-movement framework. Regarding question words carrying bias or presuppositions affecting answer sets, English employs rising declarative forms rather than interrogatives to express such nuanced meanings. Mandarin Chinese prefers rising interrogatives in similar contexts, unlike English or Bengali. Intriguingly, native speakers of Mandarin Chinese overwhelmingly opt for interrogative structures over rising declaratives, despite Chinese lacking obligatory subject-auxiliary inversion.

Similarities

Chinese and Bengali, although not related and being geographically separated have a number of fundamental grammatical similarities.

These similarities indicate that human languages with large number of languages structure questions in universal forms.

- i. Interrogative Words: Both languages make intensive use of certain words to inquire about various elements of a sentence people, things or places.
- ii. Indefinite Markers: The question words used in both languages (such as what or who) usually correspond to the words that are used in the meaning of indeterminate things (such as something or someone). This is an indication of a strong relationship between the unknown in a question and the unspecified in a statement.
- iii. Negation Patterns: Question words in the Mandarin Chinese are not usually marked with the negation symbol (such as words like no, not).
- iv. Subject-Operator Inversion: Regular grammatical operators are also used in both languages and there is need to invert the sentence by placing the subject and the operator in inverse form.
- v. Choice-Based Systems: The system of so-called alternative questions is very systematized in both languages. There are two fundamental forms of these alternative questions in the Chinese language which are very much reflected by the three different forms of interrogative markers used in Bengali.
- vi. Particles vs. Concepts: The two languages make use of small particles in marking questions (as in *ma* in the Chinese language or *kii* in the Bengali language), they can also have conceptual questions. These are questions that are not dependent on the particle; they are subject to conversation and dependent on the word of a question.
- vii. Lack of Word-Ending Changes: Both Chinese and Bengali do not have questions with modified word endings. Instead they have syntactic structures which concentrate on the arrangement of words in a row.

- viii. Using these similarities we can observe that the two languages deal with the root of a question in a similar manner where operators identify that we require new information.

Differences

Though the similarities demonstrate that they have common goals, the differences demonstrate that each language has some internal rules. Chinese and Bengali questions are distinct in four major ways:

- i. Placement of Words (In Situ vs. Movement): Question words remain in place in Mandarin Chinese that is, they do not get transferred to another position as in the answer. As an example, in Who are you the word who remains in the same position as the name of the person would. According to Bengali, the question word is put in front of other words and appears as the very first word in the sentence.
- ii. Number of Question Words: Chinese is more accommodating to complicated questions. It can use several question words within a single sentence (e.g. Who went where?). Bengali restricts itself to use of one question word per sentence.
- iii. Use of Particles: The Chinese language is characterized by the heavy use of sentence-final particles - small words such as *ma* or *ne* which are used to show that a question is being asked. Bengali is not a language of end particles; there is a way of showing a question; they push the question word to the first position.
- iv. Reduplicative Interrogatives: Chinese consistently uses A-not-A reduplication as a grammaticalized strategy to form interrogatives while Bengali uses the particle *কি* in coordination with the positive and negative forms to express the same meaning. This can be considered a typological distinction between reduplication in Chinese and coordination through a particle in Bengali.
- v. Morphology of an Internal Word: The Chinese language has a simple morphology, i.e. words seldom vary in the language.

Bengali is very inflectional; the words end in suffix (suffixes are endings of words) to represent number, tense, mood and other grammatical elements.

Conclusion

Interrogative sentences are considered as one of the important markers of human language which are attested in all living languages to the present-day time. Interrogative sentences can be generated if interrogative operators are set in the root position. Thus, these sentences can also be called as root interrogatives. These root interrogatives can be used to ask direct questions in a direct conversation related to a particular statement. In a sentence, question always requires new information which cannot be answered by 'yes' or 'no'. If the possible answer can be provided by 'yes' or 'no', then such types of sentences are categorized as yes-no questions. This paper demonstrates that Chinese and Bengali are in a completely different language family (the Sino-Tibetan and the Indo-European language families), but, nevertheless, they both apply complex systems to find out the information. Be it a language based on sentence final particle as in Chinese or initial word movement as in Bengali, the aim is the same to build a meaning. Comparing these two remote languages we understand better about the principles of human speech that are universal. This study is one that fills the gap between two large linguistic worlds and serves as a good contribution to linguists, teachers, and students. The way we ask questions is finally a comprehension of a basic aspect of what it means to be a human being.

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Evaluating Oral Presentation Performance in a Professional Arabic Language Course: A Rubric-Based Study

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Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History</i> Date of Submission 29-01-2026 Date of Acceptance 06-05-2026 Date of Publication 15-06-2026	Arabic for Professional Purposes courses increasingly include oral presentations to combine linguistic competence with communication skills, yet empirical research on their assessment remains limited. This study examines patterns in oral presentation performance across linguistic, interactional, and professional dimensions, including relationships among assessment criteria, their association with overall performance, and potential gender differences. Data from 75 undergraduate student oral presentations at the University of Dhaka were evaluated using a five-criterion analytic rubric: Objectivity of Content, ‘Pronunciation and Fluency’, Grammar, Interaction, and Attire. These data were analyzed using Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and an independent-samples t-test. All criteria showed strong, significant intercorrelations. Objectivity of Content, ‘Pronunciation and Fluency’, and Grammar correlated most strongly with overall performance. Regression analysis identified ‘Pronunciation and Fluency’ as the sole significant
<i>Keywords</i> Arabic for professional purposes, Oral presentation assessment, Presentation interaction; Pronunciation and fluency, Rubric-based assessment	

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predictor of Interaction, highlighting fluency's role in audience engagement. No significant gender differences were found. The study advocates for context-appropriate, rubric-based evaluation in underrepresented professional Arabic settings.

Introduction

Oral presentations are widely used in language classrooms as learner-centered activities that improve speaking skills, boost confidence, and increase audience awareness. In professional language courses, oral presentations play an important role in preparing students to communicate effectively in real-world professional environments. As oral communication is recognized as a key outcome of higher education, presentation tasks have become an important way for learners to demonstrate their ability to convey information, ideas, and arguments to an audience.

To evaluate oral presentations in classroom settings, instructors commonly use rubrics. A rubric can be defined as “a coherent set of criteria for students’ work that includes descriptions of levels of performance quality on the criteria” (Brookhart, 2013, p. 4). Rubrics clarify assessment expectations for students, support fair and consistent judgment by instructors, and provide structured feedback that facilitates learning (Allen & Tanner, 2006). In oral presentation assessment, analytic rubrics typically include criteria for content quality, pronunciation and fluency, grammatical accuracy, and audience interaction, where performance is evaluated across levels from lower to higher proficiency.

The undergraduate course Arabic for Professional Purposes at the University of Dhaka includes oral presentations as a topic to combine linguistic competence with professional communication skills. In this course, students are required to deliver presentations in Arabic as non-native speakers. In this study, students’ performance was evaluated based on five criteria: Objectivity of Content, Pronunciation and Fluency, Grammar, Interaction, and Attire (professional appearance).

These criteria were chosen to reflect the linguistic, interactional, and professional aspects of oral presentation skills relevant to the course.

Literature Review

Oral Presentation Performance in Language Education

In language education, oral presentation performance involves multiple dimensions, including linguistic, discourse-related, and interactional competencies. It allows learners to demonstrate content clarity, fluency, grammatical accuracy, and the ability to engage with the audience. Studies show some agreement between teachers' and students' views on what makes an effective presentation. For instance, a survey of Iranian EFL teachers and students by Soureshjani & Ghanbari (2012) found that presentation details and voice quality were the most important factors. Additionally, message transfer, manner of presentation, body language, and feedback also played important roles. In contrast, presentation style and the use of external resources were considered less significant. This emphasizes the combined role of language proficiency and delivery techniques in successful performance.

Assessment of Oral Presentations

Assessing oral presentations in language education often depends on performance-based approaches. Among these, analytic rubrics are preferred because they enable transparent and separate evaluation of various performance aspects, though their practical application outside English language teaching is still limited.

In a qualitative study on learners of Arabic as a Foreign Language, Fauzi & Rahmawati (2025) did a performance-based speaking assessment using criteria such as pronunciation, fluency, coherence, accuracy, and confidence. Their findings suggest that performance-based assessment may better reflect learners' speaking skills than traditional testing methods, which supports the use of rubrics for evaluation. Besides, Al-khresheh (2024) demonstrated the quantitative use of an analytic rubric to assess students' oral presentation skills

before and after an instructional intervention. His criteria included content, lexical resources, pronunciation, fluency and coherence, grammatical range and accuracy, engagement and interaction, and overall presentation skills to enable systematic comparison of performance across assessment stages.

Key Components of Oral Presentation Performance

Key components of oral presentation performance include both linguistic and nonlinguistic dimensions. Previous studies consistently identify pronunciation and fluency as central components. Empirical evidence from Al-khresheh (2024) shows that fluency and coherence can improve significantly through continuous presentation practice, while grammatical accuracy and lexical control also enhance overall presentation quality.

A qualitative case study of English teachers by Ranganathan & Al-Khulaidi (2025) identified pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary as common linguistic criteria for assessment. Beyond these linguistic competencies, interactional and paralinguistic elements—such as body language, voice quality, energy, and preparation—also impact effectiveness. However, as they observed, these nonlinguistic criteria are applied less consistently and are often viewed as subjective. This finding highlights the importance of clearly defined criteria to assess interactional and delivery-related aspects of oral presentations.

Research Gap and Relevance to the Present Study

Interest in assessing oral presentations in EFL and AFL contexts has increased. However, most empirical research has focused on English language courses or general academic presentations. Quantitative research on Arabic oral presentation performance remains limited. This gap is particularly noticeable in Bangladesh, where Arabic is taught as a foreign language with academic, religious, and professional importance. To date, no study has systematically examined students' oral presentation performance based on specific criteria.

This study addresses this gap. It provides a quantitative, multidimensional assessment of oral presentation performance. It also offers context-specific empirical evidence in an underexplored area of Arabic language education research.

Rationale of the Study

Oral presentations are widely used in higher education to develop students' communication skills, confidence, and audience engagement. In language programs, they reflect key aspects of speaking competence such as fluency, grammatical accuracy, and interactional competence. However, in professional language contexts, effective performance extends beyond linguistic accuracy to align with professional norms and expectations. This creates a need for assessment approaches that capture both linguistic and contextual dimensions of communication.

The present study is motivated by the limited use of empirically grounded, rubric-based quantitative assessment in Arabic for Professional Purposes courses, especially in Bangladesh. Though analytic rubrics are widely recommended in language education for evaluating speaking performance, their systematic application in professional Arabic contexts remains underexplored. By implementing a structured analytic rubric in a classroom setting, this study aims to provide a more robust basis for evaluating professional Arabic oral communication. Here, core assessment criteria such as Objectivity of Content, Pronunciation and Fluency, Grammar, and Interaction form the core focus of the assessment framework. Simultaneously, Attire serves as a complementary dimension that reflects awareness of professional norms. Prior research (Sotak et al., 2023; Furnham et al., 2013) indicates that clothing “influences perceptions” of “credibility”, “competence”, and “ethicality” in professional settings, which supports its inclusion as a secondary factor.

Accordingly, the study is justified on three grounds: (1) it addresses an empirical gap by examining Arabic oral presentation performance within an underrepresented national context; (2) it examines the relationships among linguistic, delivery-related, and professional

dimensions of presentation performance; and (3) it empirically examines professional appearance as a context-sensitive assessment criterion within a rubric-based evaluative framework.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- Q1. What are the relationships among the assessment criteria used to evaluate students' oral presentation performance?
- Q2. To what extent does each assessment criterion relate to students' overall oral presentation performance?
- Q3. Is there a significant difference in oral presentation performance based on gender?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

- (1) examine the relationships among the assessment criteria used to evaluate oral presentation performance;
- (2) analyze the extent to which each criterion relates to overall oral presentation performance, with particular attention to professional appearance in relation to linguistic and performance-based measures; and
- (3) investigate whether oral presentation performance differs by gender.

Methodology

Context and Participants

Each course in the Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Arabic program at the Department of Arabic, University of Dhaka, is taught by two instructors, each responsible for different topics. In this case, the first author taught *Arabic for Professional Purposes* and was responsible for the presentation component of the syllabus. The presentations were

held at the Department of Arabic, University of Dhaka, in October 2023 during the seventh semester.

The total enrollment in the course was 140 students, including 107 males and 33 females. All participants were native speakers of Bangla, and Arabic was studied within the course as a non-native language for professional purposes. Participation in the presentation task was voluntary; 75 students chose to participate. Among them, 67 were male and 8 were female, with an age range of 22-24 years.

Research Design

This classroom-based study employed a descriptive–comparative, observational, cross-sectional design to evaluate students’ performance in oral presentations. The design allows for a systematic description and comparison of students’ performance across multiple assessment criteria without manipulating variables or introducing instructional interventions. The study was observational in nature, as the instructor (first author) rated students’ performance during regular class sessions rather than under experimental conditions. It was cross-sectional, since all data were collected within a single semester of the course. The unit of analysis was the individual student presentation.

Students’ performance was evaluated using a structured rubric, as described in the following section, which provided the framework for analyzing variation across criteria and examining relationships among them.

Instrument: Rubric and Scoring

Presentations were evaluated in real time by the instructor (first author), who was familiar with the course objectives and rubric descriptors, using a five-level analytic rubric (1 = Poor to 5 = Excellent) across five criteria:

- 1. Objectivity of Content** — focus, relevance, and conciseness of content.

2. **Pronunciation & Fluency** — clarity of articulation, flow, and smoothness of delivery.
3. **Grammar** — accuracy and appropriateness of syntactic structures.
4. **Interaction** — ability to engage the audience, maintain attention, and respond to their questions effectively.
5. **Attire (Professional Appearance)** — formal or at least semi-formal, clean dress appropriate for a professional presentation context.

Rubric Descriptors

- **5 (Excellent):** fully focused and relevant content; highly fluent and natural delivery; grammar nearly free from error; highly engaging interaction; formal or semi-formal and clean attire.
- **4 (Very Good):** minor lapses in focus; occasional hesitations; minor grammatical slips; generally engaging interaction; semi-formal and clean attire with minor lapses.
- **3 (Good):** generally relevant content with some unnecessary detail; noticeable hesitations that do not disrupt communication; grammatical errors present but not obscuring meaning; limited interaction; generally appropriate attire.
- **2 (Fair):** partially irrelevant content; frequent hesitations or mispronunciations; grammatical errors that sometimes affect clarity; minimal interaction; casual or somewhat untidy attire inconsistent with professional presentation norms.
- **1 (Poor):** off-topic or disorganized content; halting and unclear delivery; constant grammatical errors that hinder meaning; no audience engagement; inappropriate or distracting attire.

A total score for each student was calculated as the arithmetic mean of the five criteria, with all criteria weighted equally (range: 5.00–25.00).

Procedure for Conducting Oral Presentations

The instructor (first author) had announced the presentation guidelines one week before the presentation activity began and

provided three topics for students to prepare. At the time of presentation, each student picked one of the three topics through a lottery, which ensured that the topics were randomly assigned. Presentations were conducted across eight regular class sessions. The instructor (first author) observed each presentation in real time and immediately rated performance on all five criteria using a standardized score sheet.

Data Handling and Preparation

Scores recorded during the presentations were transferred from paper-based score sheets into a spreadsheet with one row per student and separate columns for the five assessment criteria. The dataset was checked for data entry errors and missing values.

To prepare the data, each student's overall performance score was calculated as the arithmetic mean of the five criterion scores (range: 5.00–25.00). The data were then organized by student and gender and prepared for subsequent descriptive and comparative statistical analyses.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 27). First, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to examine associations among the five assessment criteria. A regression analysis was then conducted to further explore the relationships among the criteria. Finally, a t-test was conducted to assess the effect of gender on performance. All statistical analyses were performed at a significance level of $\alpha = .05$.

Ethical Considerations

The study involved a normal course activity and did not expose students to any risks beyond standard classroom practice. Participation in the presentations was voluntary, and students who chose not to

participate faced no disadvantage. No recordings were made. Scores were recorded on paper sheets with class roll numbers and gender only. No names or other identifying details were collected. Data were later anonymized for analysis and reporting. The ethical principles of fairness, transparency, and respect for students were maintained consistently throughout the process.

Results

Table 1. Pearson correlations among assessment criteria and overall performance

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Objectivity of Content	1					
2. Pronunciation & Fluency	.67**	1				
3. Grammar	.61**	.67**	1			
4. Interaction	.44**	.53**	.42**	1		
5. Attire	.53**	.35**	.36**	.28*	1	
6. Overall Performance	.86**	.84**	.83**	.66**	.66**	1

Note. $p < .05$ (*), $p < .01$ (**).

Table 1 presents the Pearson product–moment correlations among the five assessment criteria and overall performance. Strong and statistically significant positive correlations were observed among all criteria. All correlations were significant at the .01 level, except for the association between Attire and Interaction, which was significant at the .05 level.

Overall performance demonstrated particularly strong correlations with Objectivity of Content, Pronunciation and Fluency, and Grammar, indicating that these criteria were closely aligned with the composite performance score. Interaction and Attire were also significantly correlated with overall performance, though with comparatively lower coefficients.

Table 2. Multiple regression model predicting interaction from assessment criteria

<i>Model</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	SE	<i>F</i>	Sig.	Durbin-Watson
1	.549	.301	.261	.57	7.55	<.001	1.87

Note. Predictors included Objectivity of Content, Pronunciation and Fluency, Grammar, and Attire. The dependent variable was Interaction.

To further explore the relationships among the assessment criteria, a multiple regression analysis was conducted with Interaction as the dependent variable and Objectivity of Content, Pronunciation and Fluency, Grammar, and Attire as predictors. As shown in Table 2, the model yielded a multiple correlation coefficient of $R = .549$ and an R^2 value of .301, indicating that approximately 30.1% of the variance in Interaction scores was accounted for by the four predictors. The adjusted R^2 value (.261) suggested a modest reduction, reflecting model generalizability. The overall model was statistically significant, $F(4, 70) = 7.55, p < .001$.

Table 3. Regression coefficients for predictors of interaction

Predictors	Unstandardized β	SE	Standardized β	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Objectivity of Content	.076	.115	.101	.654	.515
Pronunciation & Fluency	.330	.127	.394	2.60	.011
Grammar	.049	.091	.075	.532	.596
Attire	.044	.095	.055	.464	.644

As shown in Table 3, the regression coefficients indicated that ‘Pronunciation and Fluency’ was the only predictor that made a statistically significant unique contribution to Interaction ($\beta = .394, p = .011$). The remaining predictors—Objectivity of Content, Grammar, and Attire—did not reach statistical significance. This finding suggests that, within this assessment framework, students’ Pronunciation and Fluency were most strongly associated with their ability to engage the audience during oral presentations.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics and independent-samples *t*-test results for gender differences in overall performance

				Levene's Test		t-test		
Gender	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	Sig.	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Male	67	11.910	3.401	1.973	.164	.029	73	.977
Female	8	11.875	1.885					

Note. Dependent Variable: Overall performance.

Table 4 presents descriptive statistics and the results of an independent-samples *t*-test examining gender differences in overall oral presentation performance. Male students ($M = 11.91$, $SD = 3.40$) and female students ($M = 11.88$, $SD = 1.89$) demonstrated very similar mean performance scores. Levene's test for equality of variances was not significant ($F = 1.97$, $p = .164$), indicating that the assumption of equal variances was met. The *t*-test revealed no statistically significant difference between male and female students' performance, $t(73) = .03$, $p = .977$.

Discussion

This study examined students' oral presentation performance in an Arabic for Professional Purposes course. It focused on relationships among assessment criteria, their association with overall performance, and potential gender differences. Here, the findings confirm that oral presentation performance is multidimensional. They also offer practical insights for teaching, practicing, and assessing professional Arabic presentations.

Strong correlations were found among Objectivity of Content, 'Pronunciation and Fluency', Grammar, Interaction, and Attire. This indicates that effective oral presentations are not the result of isolated abilities but the combination of linguistic competence, communicative delivery, and professional awareness. From a pedagogical perspective, this indicates that presentation skills should not be treated as optional. Instead, instructors should integrate them into comprehensive instructional sequences. These sequences should combine content planning, language practice, and performance rehearsal. The

particularly strong association between Objectivity of Content and overall performance highlights the importance of guiding students toward purposeful structure, relevant content, and professional audience awareness, beyond linguistic form alone.

Interaction and Attire showed comparatively weaker correlations with overall performance. However, both were still significantly related to the composite score. This indicates that they function as supportive dimensions of effective presentations. In classroom settings, interaction reflects students' ability to hold audience attention, manage turn-taking, and respond to questions. These are important skills in professional communication. Though Attire is not a linguistic dimension, it signals students' awareness of professional norms and expectations. These findings suggest that instructors should clearly address interactional strategies and professional presentation norms with students rather than assuming that such competencies will naturally develop.

The regression analysis provides insight into pedagogical considerations related to fluency and interaction. 'Pronunciation and Fluency' was the only criterion that uniquely predicted Interaction, indicating that students who spoke more smoothly and confidently were better able to engage their audience. Limited fluency may reduce interaction, even when content knowledge is strong. In professional Arabic classrooms, where students often prepare presentations thoroughly yet struggle with spontaneous speech, insufficient fluency may hinder audience engagement, responsiveness, and confidence. This finding highlights the pedagogical importance of fluency-focused activities such as repeated short presentations, guided rehearsals, and interactive speaking exercises. These activities prioritize flow and automaticity rather than accuracy alone.

The absence of a statistically significant gender difference in overall performance suggests that male and female students performed similarly within this instructional setting. From a teaching perspective, this finding supports the use of consistent performance expectations, assessment criteria, and instructional support for all students regardless

of gender. However, because of the imbalance in group sizes, this result should be viewed with caution and should not be taken as evidence of overall gender neutrality in presentation performance.

Limitations

The study has several limitations along with its contributions, which should be acknowledged. First, the sample was taken from a single course at a single institution, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other Arabic language programs or educational settings. Second, participation in the presentation task was voluntary, which raises the possibility of self-selection bias, as more confident or motivated students may have chosen to participate. Third, the assessment relied on ratings done by a single instructor. Although the use of a structured analytic rubric supports consistency, the lack of inter-rater reliability analysis limits the ability to assess scoring objectivity. Fourth, the gender comparison was limited by a substantial imbalance in group sizes, particularly the small number of female participants, which decreases statistical power. Lastly, the study focused on performance outcomes at a single point in time and did not examine changes in presentation skills over time.

Implications

The findings of this study have several implications for teaching and assessment in professional Arabic language courses. First, the strong associations between linguistic criteria and overall performance highlight the continued importance of pronunciation and fluency, and grammatical accuracy in professional oral communication. Instructors may prioritize activities that improve both fluent, accurate speech and the organization of content.

Second, the observed association between ‘Pronunciation and Fluency’ and Interaction suggests the importance of including instructional activities that promote spontaneous speech and audience engagement in low-stress environments. Such activities might involve short impromptu presentations, discussions, and simulated professional interactions, which may help students develop more

confidence and communicative flexibility.

Third, including Attire as an assessment criterion draws attention to the broader communication norms of professional contexts. Discussing professional presentation norms explicitly may help students understand how linguistic performance and professional appearance jointly shape audience perceptions. A rubric-based approach can help clarify how these expectations are incorporated into classroom assessment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and limitations of the study, several recommendations can be made here. Future research should replicate this study across multiple institutions and professional Arabic courses to enhance generalizability. Involving multiple raters and conducting inter-rater reliability analysis would enhance the methodological rigor of such a rubric-based assessment.

Further research could also use longitudinal designs to examine how students' oral presentation skills develop over time and how continuous exposure to presentation tasks influences their linguistic and interactional competence. Future research may also explore alternative modeling approaches to better understand the relative impacts of various assessment criteria, such as analyzing overall performance as a dependent variable.

From a pedagogical perspective, instructors are encouraged to use analytic rubrics not only for grading but also as formative tools to support student preparation and self-reflection. Providing rubric descriptors in advance and giving specific feedback may help learners focus on both linguistic accuracy and presenting professionally.

Conclusion

This study used a rubric-based quantitative approach to examine students' oral presentation performance in an Arabic for Professional

Purposes course in Bangladesh. The findings show that oral presentation performance is a multidimensional model that interconnects linguistic, interactional, and professional dimensions. Core linguistic criteria—particularly Pronunciation and Fluency—had a strong correlation with overall performance and played a key role in engaging the audience.

The absence of significant gender differences indicates that performance outcomes in this context were not influenced by gender, though this result should be interpreted cautiously because of sample limitations. By including Attire as a context-specific criterion, the study extends existing research and highlights the relevance of professional norms in evaluating oral communication.

All findings, limitations, and implications of this study highlight the importance of using a context-appropriate, rubric-based approach when evaluating oral presentations in professional Arabic language courses. Overall, the study offers empirical evidence from an underrepresented context and provides practical insights for teaching, assessment, and curriculum development in professional Arabic language education. Additionally, it highlights the usefulness of analytic rubrics in helping students prepare for professional communication.

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Effect of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Learning French: A Quantitative Study from the University of Dhaka

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Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History</i> Date of Submission 29-01-2026 Date of Acceptance 06-05-2026 Date of Publication 15-06-2026	The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in language education is significantly increasing over time. The current study is an investigation on the use of AI-based tools by French language learners at the University of Dhaka to find out and understand its impact on the learners' confidence and autonomy. Data was collected through an online based questionnaire administered to 52 learners having various levels of French. The frequency and perceived impact of using AI tools for reading, writing, listening, and speaking abilities were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings clearly demonstrate that the students depend mostly on AI-based tools for improving their reading and writing abilities where intensity is seen in writing section. They agreed on the question of advancing their confidence and independence through using Artificial Intelligence. A decline in the use of AI tools for developing speaking and listening skills is demonstrated equally. One of the reasons for this decline may be the underdeveloped conversational language of the AI tools. More than half of the participants agreed on becoming too dependent
<i>Keywords</i> Artificial intelligence (AI), Language education, AI-assisted learning, Learner autonomy	

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on AI. Despite this dependency, many complained about often receiving incorrect information. So, the result suggests that AI tools should be used as an assistant to the traditional language learning, not the substitution.

Introduction

The contemporary education system has been greatly impacted by Artificial Intelligence (AI). It is the era of technology, and students are no longer confined to learning in a classroom. Learning has also expanded aggressively, thanks to digital platforms and AI-powered tools. In learning French, AI has played a key role. Tools based on AI help students improve all language skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

AI and French language learning are becoming increasingly popular in many developed or developing countries. From ChatGPT to Duolingo, from Grammarly and Google Translate to Elsa Speak, these are just a few of the many: they have tended to make learning more personal, convenient, and on demand. However, despite the increasing popularity of blended learning, there are not enough studies in local contexts regarding its influence on improving language competencies and confidence among learners, particularly in university-level settings in Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, French language teaching and learning has been classroom-based and teacher-centered. Even though students begin to make use of AI tools independently, it remains uncertain how intentional and purposeful this usage is with its potential value or drawbacks (Zhai et al., 2024). Students of French language program at the University of Dhaka use a wide range of AI-based tools, but there are fewer studies focusing on the nature, degree, and impact of their usage based on empirical quantitative data.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the emerging popularity of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in French language education, few studies have systematically examined its actual implementation. AI tools like Duolingo, Grammarly, Google

Translate, Gemini and ChatGPT are increasingly used in Bangladesh for learning French. But there is little information on which AI tools French learners access and how much time they spend in these tools. French language education in Bangladesh has been traditionally instructor-focused. Although some students have been investigating AI-based tools autonomously, there is limited literature on how these tools enhance language proficiency, confidence, and autonomy. Furthermore, their effects on students' language ability, confidence, and independence have not been investigated.

In addition, there are concerns about the usefulness of AI tools as real language learning aids or if instead they promote dependency or misinformation. In this situation, it became a necessity to conduct a systematic quantitative inquiry to understand the use of AI tools for language learners. The purpose of this study is to screen the use of AI tools in learning French at the University of Dhaka by investigating on how students use AI tools and have visible effects on their language skills and motivation. The results will contribute to performing educational practices with the integration of AI tools into language learning programs.

Significance of Study

This study has both academic and practical significance. Academically, it has the potential to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the use of AI in learning French at the tertiary level education in Bangladesh. The outcomes of this study will provide useful implications for teachers, learners, and policymakers to use AI tools effectively and responsibly in language education. By knowing the advantages and disadvantages of AI supports, this study suggests ways to improve language learning strategies at the University of Dhaka as well as at other places in Bangladesh.

Research Objectives

The aim of the present study is to explore how Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools are used by French learners at the University of Dhaka. The objectives of the study are:

- To discover the types of AI tools used by the students in learning French language.
- To identify how much and how often AI tools are applied to improve different aspects of the language.
- To comprehend the rationale and context for using AI tools.
- To investigate the effect of AI tool using on students' competency, confidence, and autonomy in language learning.

Research Questions

This research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What kinds of AI tools do students use to practice varied language skills in French language learning?
2. What is the frequency and duration of student use of AI tools?
3. How does the use of AI tools influence students' perceived language proficiency?
4. What impact does the use of AI tools have on students' confidence and independence in learning the language?

Literature Review

In recent years, the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital learning tools has become a major area of study in language education (Godwin-Jones, 2021; UNESCO, 2023). AI is creating new opportunities for education while helping students and educators to improve the learning process. Gupta et al. (2025) mentioned that AI revolutionized education and contributed dramatically to making personalized learning.

AI for French Language Education in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the use of AI has been growing in teaching and learning of foreign languages in general, including French language. Szmyd and Mitera (2026) reported that students from higher education often used AI-based tools while learning French. They highlighted on the beliefs of the students that AI supports faster learning and improves

their language skills. But students do not think of AI as a replacement for teachers. Instead, they saw this as an assistive tool in an individual-focused learning process.

Karataş et al. (2024) exposed 13 preparatory class students to ChatGPT over four weeks in a qualitative case study. Findings indicated that ChatGPT improved the learning experience, motivation, and engagement of students. While examining the ethical and pedagogical issues of using AI in teaching and learning French, Chaubey (2024) noted that while many of the respondents believed that AI enhanced the act of learning French, most said it could not replace a human teacher.

There exists lack of authentic interaction, absence of cultural context and over-reliance on technology because of digital tools. So, besides using AI, the findings stressed the need for thoughtful integration alongside work led by humans and face to face human contact (Szmyd and Mitera, 2026). Chaubey (2024) uncovered further issues, including data privacy, accent misinterpretation, emotional detachment, and diminished cultural relevance in the applying AI for French language acquisition. The study advocates for AI to serve as a supplementary resource rather than a substitute of learning methods.

Alongside students, teachers also integrate AI in their teaching practices. They want AI tools for the classroom, but they are not inadequately trained for that. 70% of teachers had not received any professional training (Roshan et al., 2024). Islam (2024) claims readiness of teachers is important. While teachers who desire to use AI tools in their teaching are highly motivated, they also encounter obstacles due to inadequate training and support. Adopting Davis's Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Islam examined teachers' adoption of AI and their worry and demand for professional development. The studies revealed that induction and in-service support were critical for improving the students' learning opportunities, as well as strengthening teachers' confidence. The former findings show that sufficient training for teachers is necessary not only to benefit students but also to expand teachers' capacity of effectively using AI.

Mavropoulou and Arvanitis (2023) stressed how they integrated AI into their teaching of French as a foreign language with a case study using an already designed course unit at CEFR A2 level. They found out that AI can automatically generate learning content of sufficient quality and can help teachers tailor up educational content in accordance with course requirements. The study concludes that AI tool could help in supporting language teaching, especially for materials and lesson planning.

Hossain and Al Hasan (2023) investigated the growing use of EdTech in learning foreign languages in Bangladesh. They found that, while EdTech can enhance learning, students often struggle to fully benefit from such resources owing to a lack of infrastructure and institutional support. There are some schools that help students with EdTech; however, for the most part, it is left for the students. Their research indicates that use of EdTech is more likely amongst students who have access to support and who can study more effectively.

AI in Higher Education

AI has become important research areas in higher education nowadays. AI-based tools are used in several ways to support teaching and learning in universities and colleges. Crompton and Burke (2023) notes that the use of AI in higher education has boomed rapidly. Their findings highlighted language learning as the predominant subject area where AI was being used. Key applications of AI are assessment and evaluation, prediction, AI assistants, intelligent tutoring systems, and management of student learning.

Bearman, Ryan, and Ajjawi (2023) also mentioned that AI in higher education tends to be vague when its ethical implications are not fully discussed. They also said that AI is transforming educators' traditional roles and raising new questions about authority, responsibility and relations in the classroom. The literature, therefore, suggests that despite offering great possibilities, it requires critical attention to ethical and pedagogical concerns.

AI-Based Writing Tools in Education

In higher education, students are being affected by AI language writing tools. Alam (2025) investigated the paper writer tool for AI writings and reported that although AI helps to adjust grammar penalties, it organizes written articles but may decrease the originality of writing as well as students' confidence in writing. The implication that AI refers more to the teacher than to the student is underscored by this research, which identified two strengths of educational implementation that are contingent on responsible use by the teacher and students' computer literacy.

AI Tools and ChatGPT for Learning Foreign Languages

Researchers have also studied the possible language learning utility of ChatGPT and found it to be an effective tool for polishing writing, grammar, and lexicon. Karataş et al. (2024) exposed 13 preparatory class students to ChatGPT over four weeks in a qualitative case study. Findings indicated that ChatGPT improved the learning experience, motivation, and engagement of students. It offered a range of accessible and flexible learning strategies that enhanced the learner's experience. The study revealed that ChatGPT can be an invaluable utility for boosting pedagogical methodologies and syllabi design in language education.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) and AI Tools

The application of PBL in combination with AI and digital tools positively influences students' success and motivation and sustainability in learning foreign languages. In other research with 64 students, use of AI and digital tools has been shown to contribute towards higher learning outcomes, motivation, and longer retention in an experimental group within a PBL compared to a control group that was exposed to traditional learning strategies. (Azamatova et al., 2023).

Research Gap

Although AI-based tools are increasingly used in language learning, we do not have enough research on it in the context of French language

learning at Bangladesh. However, there is a paucity of empirical studies in terms of large-scale quantitative data regarding AI based tools and their effect on French language learners at the University of Dhaka. Most existing research is qualitative or small-scale, and less is known about the prevalence of AI tool use, its effect on language proficiency, and the degree to which it nurtures students' sense of confidence and autonomy.

In a time where ChatGPT, Gemini, Duolingo and Grammarly are already reigning the market, not much research was done to explore this solution in the context of learning French language as well as self-learning. Although some AI tools scaffold basic skills, less is known about how they influence more advanced language learning, such as pronunciation, including its correlation with writing complexity and grammar. Additionally, the reasons for students to use AI tools and the obstacles that prevent them from using these tools more effectively (e.g., dependency or lack of literacy in AI) are not well studied. These issues will be important to consider when evaluating the potential AI must assist with French language learning.

Theoretical Framework

The few studies on AI-based language tools are based on a theoretical model that explains why and how students learn languages together with these new learning methods. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), Monitor Theory of Second Language Acquisition (Krashen, 1981), and TAM Model (Davis, 1989). This study draws on SDT, TAM and Krashen to interpret findings. These theoretical foundations can help us build a rich understanding of how AI tools might affect L2 learners' motivation, engagement, and proficiency.

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985)

According to SDT, the theory of self-determination, human motivation is based on three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. These necessities are also vital factors in motivating

intrinsic foreign language learning. AI systems that give learners more control over learning pace, provide immediate feedback to increase mastery motivation, and support relatedness by including collaborative/interactive functions have a strong positive impact on engagement. Learners who feel their psychological needs are satisfied have a greater tendency to interact with learning materials and, in doing so, find higher levels of achievement and satisfaction in the acquisition of a language.

Monitor Theory (Krashen, 1981)

The Monitor Theory proposed the existence of two separate but interrelated systems for language learning: subconscious and conscious. Language development through acquisition is more successful than language learning for the simple reason that it happens subconsciously by natural exposure to the language rather than consciously trying to grasp grammatical rules and constructs. AI tech in language learning can help to enable subconscious task automatization by offering learners immediate interaction with the real world (like, for example, via language practice apps) and enabling them to gain up-to-the-minute experience of how the new language is used. Furthermore, AI feedback model helps students to be self-aware and conscious about their correct/incorrect use of the language, which will improve both systems in terms of language learning.

Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989)

The TAM model focuses on how individuals decide to accept or reject the use of technology. It implies that the extent to which users believe a technology to be easy and useful influences its acceptance. AI tools can only be integrated into language learning if they are seen as being user-friendly and successful in developing learners' language. This framework helps with the exploration of how students at the University of Dhaka perceive the utility and ease of use of AI-based language learning tools, as well as how these perceptions affect their intention to adopt and use such tools.

Methodology

Research Design

This research adopts a quantitative, descriptive research design to measure the extent, nature, frequency, and perceived impact of AI tools used by French language students at the University of Dhaka. The descriptive portion takes record of what types of AI tools students are accustomed to using and their frequency and duration of use. The study explores learners' perceived impact of AI tools on French language learning, confidence, and autonomy.

Population and Participants

The population of the study is limited to the learners of French language at the University of Dhaka. The study worked on the undergraduate students who are learning French and have various levels in French. From the total population, the researchers selected 52 participants using the convenience sampling technique. Researchers selected a representative number of students from bachelor's and master's programs. For the selection process, they took some criteria into account so that the sample size represents the total population.

Data Collection Instruments

The main data collection tool has been a self-administered questionnaire, which is introduced by a consent letter in the beginning. The questionnaire is divided into four different sections. In the first section, students' background information and skill-related data was collected that include academic year and AI experience in general. Next, they responded to the questions related to the use of different types of AI tools and their intensity. Questions include duration and frequency of using these tools. The third section, proficiency and confidence, tries to assess how students experience the effect of the use of AI tools on their skills, self-confidence, and autonomy. Finally, the challenges and practical context of using AI tools are investigated to understand the obstacles, challenges, or constraints

that students meet when using AI tools. The questionnaire was designed using a 5-point Likert scale to assess students' experiences and attitudes toward AI tools.

Data Collection Procedure

The survey has been conducted among students online using Google Forms. Participation in the research was voluntary. A written consent was also sent to the participants to inform them about the anonymity and confidentiality of their personal information and responses. Participants could stop responding at any moment. Besides, the clarity and effectiveness of the questionnaire were evaluated through a pilot study with two participants before execution. The expected data collection period was set at 3-4 weeks.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistical analysis, such as frequency counts and percentage distributions, was applied to explore the patterns of AI tool use among students and their attitudes toward French language learning.

Descriptive statistics were used to:

- Find out which kinds of AI tools are used for different language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, translation and pronunciation)
- Quantify time spent on AI tools according to skill.
- Investigate students' motivations to use AI tools.
- Investigate learners' confidence, autonomy, benefits, and drawbacks towards AI-based language learning.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics statement: This study has followed principles for the ethical treatment of subjects as set forth in research involving human participants:

Voluntary Participation: Participation is voluntary, and participants have been informed that they could quit responding to the questionnaire at any time they want.

Privacy statement: The personal details of participants have been confidential during the data collection process. Data will be used strictly for academic use in the context of this research project.

Informed consent: Informed consent was obtained through a consent statement included at the beginning of the online questionnaire.

Results and Findings

The findings are based on the responses of 52 French students at the University of Dhaka. Results highlight the use of AI tools for different language skills, time invested in these tools as perceived by learners, and students' opinion about technology (AI) effect on their language learning process, motivation and autonomy levels.

AI Tool Usage Patterns

The findings demonstrated that participants use several AI tools for language skill. Overall, ChatGPT, Google Translate, Duolingo and Gemini were all chosen as the most used tools across various language learning settings.

Listening Skills: As a listening practicing tool, YouTube (AI-based content) was the most widely utilized listening practice by all learners, at 80.8%. Duolingo and several other language learning apps were used by 46.2%, and Google Text-to-Speech was used by 36.5%. Moderate usage was revealed for podcasts (30.8%) and AI-based audio tools (25%). In contrast, for listening skills practice the participants engaged less and never learners were Memrise (3.8%), Busuu (1.9%) and FluentU (0%).

Speaking Skills: In terms of speaking tools, ChatGPT was the most frequently used (76.9%), followed by Duolingo (36.5%) and Gemini (26.6%). The other tools, DeepSeek (11.5%), HelloTalk (7.7%), and Talkpal as well as Praktika (1.9% each), were used by smaller number of students.

Reading Skills: The most common model used for reading comprehension was ChatGPT (71.2%). 41.2% of the respondents used Google Translate and AI dictionaries. Other sources were Gemini (25%) and Duolingo / LingQ reading exercises (19.2%). Notably, a significant number of students (15.4%) reported no AI use for reading.

Writing Skills: In writing abilities, ChatGPT was the most frequently used alternative with 86.5% of participants indicating exposure to its use. Other tools were Gemini (30.8%), Grammarly (28.8%), Quill Bot (23.1%), and Google Docs AI suggestions (19.2%).

Grammar and Vocabulary: For grammar resolution tools or vocabulary learning, ChatGPT (82.7%) and Google Translate (55.8%) were the tools that were most utilized. Less commonly used tools included Gemini (32.7%), Grammarly (23.1%), and Duolingo (21.2%). A few respondents (11.5%) did not use AI tools for grammar and vocabulary learning.

Translation: In translation, the most popular tools used were ChatGPT (82.7%) and Google Translate (69.2%). Small percentages of students used dictionaries (30.8%), DeepL Translator (15.4%), Gemini (21.2%), and Microsoft Translator (5.8%).

Pronunciation: Dictionaries (51.9%) and online pronunciation checkers (36.5%) were the most popular tools for pronunciation practice. However, 28.8 percent of students indicated that they had not used AI pronunciation tools at all.

Amount of Time Using AI Tools according to Language Skill

The questionnaire contained questions related to time spent using AI tools for different language skills, which were asked as separate items. Furthermore, the results indicate that AI tools are used for short durations across all language skills.

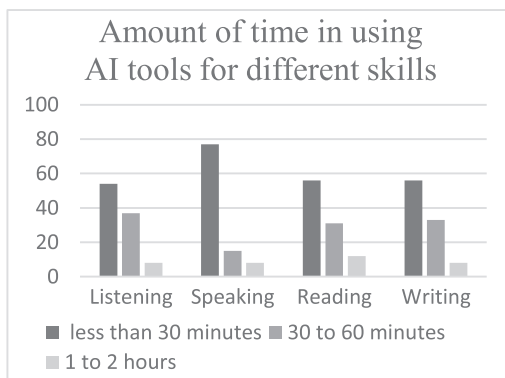
As for listening, 53.8% of students used less than 30 minutes per day, and it was approximately 36.5% that spent between 30 and 60 minutes focused on listening. Only 7.7% of the respondents reported

spending 1-2 hours and 1.9% more than two hours on AI tools daily.

In speaking ability, most of them (76.9%) used AI tools for less than 30 minutes per day. 15.4% reported spending 30-60 minutes per day, and 7.7%, 1-2 hours per day; none reported more than two hours.

For reading abilities, 55.8% of participants spent less than 30 minutes daily using AI tools, and 30.8% of participants spent 30-60 minutes per day. A small number (11.5%) used 1-2 hours per day.

In writing skills, 55.8% of students spent less than 30 minutes per day, and 32.7% studied for 30-60 minutes per day. Only 7.7% of the participants used AI for 1-2 hours a day, and no one spent more than two hours.



As for learning grammar and vocabulary, 53.8% reported a use of less than 30 minutes per day, and 36.5% spent between 30 and 60 minutes per day. Only 7.7% of the participants used AI for 1-2 hours a day, and no one spent more than two hours.

Total Time Spent with AI Tools

In terms of general daily use across all skills, 44.2% reported using AI tools for 15-30 minutes a day; the second most common level was 30-60 minutes (26.9%). A few respondents (9.6%) reported spending more than two hours a day using AI tools.

Confidence, Independence and Relevant Task Features of Learners

Findings indicate that AI tools have a positive effect on students' confidence in respect of writing and reading. AI tools assist with sentence structure, word choice and overall clarity, according to respondents. But confidence in speaking skills remained relatively low,

highlighting the failure of AI tools to provide for real conversation-based practice.

At the other end, fears of over-reliance were apparent. More than half of the respondents (51.9%) agreed with this statement that an overemphasis on AI-supported tools can reduce learner autonomy. Furthermore, 42.3% of the students strongly agreed that there are instances where AI tools give incorrect or misleading information, but such behavior would be detrimental to the learning process.

Discussion

This study explored the use of AI tools of French learners at the University of Dhaka and their perceptions regarding their impact on language learning, confidence and autonomy. Students commonly employed tools like ChatGPT, Google Translate, Duolingo and Gemini, primarily for reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary and translation. This implies that co-learning of AI should be easy to access and focused on structured learning tasks built around written texts.

The findings further indicate that use of AI was not uniform across all language skills. Use of AI tools was greatest in terms of writing and reading, but there was comparatively little support from such tools for speaking, listening and pronunciation. This pattern suggests that the existing generation of AI modalities do a lot better with understanding, writing new words, correcting existing text and rewriting than they do in real-time, speaking-in-place, and pronunciation.

Most of the students typically use AI tools less than 30 minutes each day. This indicates that AI is chiefly being deployed as an adjunct learning tool instead of a substitute for in-classroom education. Students seem to use these tools in concentrated manners, for things like checking grammar, enhancing writing, translating phrases and interpreting texts. AI tools positively impact learners' abilities to feel more confident in skills, especially reading and writing. But the study also highlighted significant concerns.

More than half of all the respondents agreed that excessive use of AI may undermine learner autonomy. Many indicated that at times AI tools return inaccurate or misleading information. This means that AI could be useful if used carefully, but depending too much on it could hurt independent learning. AI has very good potential to assist in learning French in higher education, particularly for exercises with a text form. But AI should serve as an aid, not a replacement for teacher guidance, classroom contact and genuine communicative practice. Hence the balanced utilization of AI is required to make sure that learners get a better experience from it without over relying on it.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, recommendations are suggested for instructors, students, policymakers, and educational institutions to implement AI tools in FL learning more effectively and responsibly at Dhaka University or equivalent settings.

Recommendations for Educators

- AI tools should work with traditional methods instead of replacing them while learning the French language. It is great for helping students practice their organized language abilities, like reading, writing, and grammar, but they still need to be encouraged to use language in spontaneous conversation.
- Teachers can encourage students to utilize AI tools for speaking practice. AI-powered chatbots or virtual language exchange systems could help students improve their speaking skills.
- Educators will also need to teach students how to use AI tools in a useful way. Workshops, or orientation events, can assist in making sure that students know how to utilize AI technologies safely and don't depend on them too much.

Recommendations for Students

- Ethical and responsible use of AI: students need to be taught (socialized) first how these AI tools are to be used for learning,

keeping language practice but not replacing their own practice. While such tools as grammar and vocabulary checks can be helpful, students also must do some production work without AI to develop problem-solving skills, help them become more fluent.

- Find ways where students are engaging in conversation such as language exchange partner, speaking clubs etc., so practicing with AI is further complemented by fluency and confidence.
- Students should reflect regularly on the impact of AI tools on their learning, using them in ways that are beneficial without becoming overly dependent.

Policy Recommendations for Universities and Policymakers

- Policy makers should encourage the widespread use of AI tools in French language curricula and education, ensuring multiple entry points for teachers and students.
- Professional development of teachers for the appropriate use of AI tools in French language teaching.
- The efficacy of AI tools used in language learning should be monitored to use as a tool for enhancing the language outcomes like speaking and learner confidence.

Recommendations for Future Research

- The effect of AI tools on French language proficiency, learner autonomy and motivation should be studied in the long term.
- Further research may include problems associated with the appropriateness of conversational AI (including accent correction in conversation) for teaching speaking skills.
- We need to compare how effective different language skills are enabled by various AI tools, and which tool is best for developing fluency, grammatically accurate expression and complexity in French as a second language.

Conclusion

The investigation of the use of AI in French language at the University of Dhaka showed great potential of AI-powered instruments as a support to various linguistic skills, particularly reading and writing. The results show that AI technologies made students feel more confident in learning French. AI tools can be helpful for speaking and pronunciation, but there is a limit to how helpful they can be. Students often think that AI tools are better for controlled, written tasks than for spontaneous spoken conversation.

Learning languages with the help of AI technologies can assist students in the same way teachers do, yet they cannot replace classroom instructions. They should be used to assist with grammar and vocabulary, but they also shouldn't cut into more valuable time spent interacting in school. And some of those are concerned that an over-reliance on these technologies could restrain students from learning and self-directing their own knowledge in the future.

In short, language learners will benefit greatly from using AI tools appropriately if they know a clear way to do so. The excessive use of AI could hamper the progress in the language learning process. More research would help determine whether these effects will persist and whether these tools can better assist with different language skills. Thus, Artificial Intelligence will be an effective and long-term support for language learning at the University of Dhaka and all other institutions if used with proper guideline.

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Phonotactic Constraints in Pangkhua: A Corpus-Based Analysis of Consonant Clusters and Codas

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Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History</i> Date of Submission 10-02-2026 Date of Acceptance 06-05-2026 Date of Publication 15-06-2026	This paper investigates the phonotactics of Pangkhua, an endangered Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts, through the lens of Optimality Theory (OT). Drawing on a novel corpus of approximately 2000 IPA-transcribed utterances from elicited and spontaneous speech, we focus on consonant clusters and codas, which exhibit restricted patterns: onset clusters favor sonorant-obstruent sequences (e.g., /sk/ in [eskrai] <lion>, /ndʒ/ in [andʒoar] 'sell'), while codas are predominantly nasal or liquid (e.g., /ŋ/ in [maŋ] 'forest', /l/ in [kal] 'go'), disfavoring obstruents. We propose an OT constraint hierarchy, including high-ranked *NO-CODA for obstruents and *COMPLEX-ONSET demoted below faithfulness constraints like IDENT, to account for these asymmetries. Tableaux demonstrate how this ranking predicts repairs such as vowel epenthesis or deletion in illicit forms, while accommodating Pangkhua's sesquisyllabic structures. Quantitative analysis reveals cluster frequency at 15% of syllables, with reductions in spontaneous narratives, suggesting gradient implementation. This first formal modeling of Pangkhua phonotactics not only refines descriptive accounts but also contributes
<i>Keywords</i> Optimality theory, Pangkhua, Phonotactics, Consonant clusters, Codas, Tibeto-burman, Endangered languages, Corpus analysis, Typology	

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to Tibeto-Burman typology, highlighting OT's efficacy in capturing Southeast Asian phonotactic preferences and challenging universal constraint assumptions. Implications for language preservation and comparative phonology are discussed.

Introduction

Background and Motivation

Pangkhoa, an endangered Tibeto-Burman language of the Kuki-Chin subgroup, is spoken by approximately 2,000–3,000 people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, primarily in Rangamati district. As a lesser-documented language facing pressure from dominant languages like Bengali, Pangkhua remains critically understudied, with its phonological system only recently described in detail (Akte 2024). The recent publication of *A Grammar of Pangkhua* provides a foundational descriptive account, including a phonology chapter that outlines its consonant and vowel inventories, syllable structure, and sesquisyllabic tendencies. However, this work focuses on empirical description, leaving room for formal theoretical analyses to deepen our understanding of Pangkhua's sound system. Studying under-documented languages like Pangkhua is vital not only for advancing linguistic theory and typology but also for supporting preservation efforts, as the language faces risks of attrition (UNESCO Atlas of Endangered Languages). This paper focuses on Pangkhua's phonotactics the rules governing permissible sound combinations specifically targeting consonant clusters and codas, which exhibit distinctive restrictions that align with yet diverge from broader Tibeto-Burman patterns.

Phonotactics, a core area of phonological research, determines how languages constrain the sequencing of sounds within syllables and words. In Pangkhua, preliminary observations from a novel corpus of nearly 2000 IPA-transcribed utterances reveal that consonant clusters are restricted to specific sonorant-obstruent sequences (e.g., /sk/ in [eskrai] 'lion', /ndʒ/ in [andʒoar] 'sell'), while codas are predominantly

limited to nasals and liquids (e.g., /ŋ/ in [maŋ] ‘forest’, /l/ in [kal] ‘go’). These patterns, while partially noted in Akter (2024), have not been modeled formally, leaving open questions about the underlying principles shaping them. Optimality Theory (OT; Prince & Smolensky 2004), with its framework of ranked constraints, offers a robust tool to explain why certain clusters and codas are permitted while others are banned or repaired (e.g., through vowel epenthesis or deletion). By applying OT to Pangkhua, this study aims to bridge descriptive and theoretical phonology, contributing to the growing body of work on Tibeto-Burman languages, where only ~10% of the ~450 varieties have detailed phonological analyses (STEDT database).

Research Problem and Questions

While Akter’s (2024) grammar describes Pangkhua’s phonotactic patterns, such as the prevalence of onset clusters like /sk/ and coda restrictions to nasals and liquids, it does not provide a formal account of why these constraints exist or how they interact. This gap is significant, as phonotactic restrictions reflect deeper phonological principles that can inform both language-specific and universal theories of sound systems. This paper addresses the following research questions: (1) Can Optimality Theory account for Pangkhua’s phonotactic constraints on consonant clusters and codas? (2) What constraint hierarchy explains the preference for sonorant-obstruent clusters and nasal or liquid codas? These questions leverage a unique corpus of elicited and spontaneous speech to test OT’s explanatory power in a new empirical domain.

Objectives and Contribution

The primary objective of this study is to propose an OT-based model of Pangkhua’s phonotactics, focusing on consonant clusters and codas, using a corpus of ~2000 IPA-transcribed utterances collected from field data. This corpus, comprising elicited sentences, grammatical forms (e.g., verbal conjugations), and spontaneous narratives (e.g., folk tales), provides a rich dataset for quantitative and qualitative analysis. By developing a constraint hierarchy (e.g., prioritizing *NO-CODA

for obstruents and demoting *COMPLEX-ONSET), this paper offers the first formal phonological analysis of Pangkhua's phonotactics. The contributions are threefold: (1) it advances theoretical phonology by applying OT to an understudied language, testing its cross-linguistic validity; (2) it refines descriptive accounts of Pangkhua by quantifying cluster and coda frequencies (e.g., ~15% of syllables with clusters, ~20% with codas); and (3) it enriches Tibeto-Burman typology by comparing Pangkhua's patterns to related languages like Mizo or Bawm, highlighting its unique nasal coda dominance. Additionally, the findings support preservation efforts by informing orthography development and language teaching, aligning with broader goals of endangered language documentation.

Literature Review

Optimality Theory (OT) has become a dominant framework for analysing phonotactic constraints across languages (Prince & Smolensky, 2004; Kager, 1999). By ranking universal markedness and faithfulness constraints, OT elegantly explains why certain sound combinations are permitted while others are repaired through deletion, epenthesis, or feature change. The Obligatory Contour Principle (*OCP) is one of the most widely used markedness constraints in this literature, penalising adjacent segments that share the same place or manner features (McCarthy, 1986, 1995, 2003; Bennett, 2013). *OCP has been successfully applied to cluster restrictions and dissimilation in a variety of languages, including those with complex onset or coda patterns (Alderete, 1997; Moreton, 2008).

Within the Tibeto-Burman family, phonotactic studies have focused on syllable structure, sesquisyllabicity, and coda restrictions. Burling (2003) and Matisoff (2003) provide foundational overviews of Tibeto-Burman phonology, noting the prevalence of sonorant-obstruent onset clusters and a strong tendency toward nasal or liquid codas in many Kuki-Chin languages. More recent work on individual languages has employed OT to model these patterns. For example, Chirkova and Chen (2013) used OT to analyse the phonological system of Qiang, demonstrating how sonority and alignment constraints govern

complex onsets and minor syllables. Similarly, Hyman and VanBik (2004) applied OT to tone and cluster interactions in Hakha Lai, while Coupe (2007) examined sesquisyllabic structures in Mongsen Ao. These studies highlight the value of OT for capturing both universal tendencies and language-specific phonotactic asymmetries in Tibeto-Burman.

Pangkhua, a Kuki-Chin language spoken in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts, has only recently received systematic documentation. Akter's (2024) *A Grammar of Pangkhua* offers the first comprehensive description, outlining a consonant inventory, a vowel system with frequent diphthongs, and a (C)V(C) syllable template that frequently exhibits sesquisyllabicity. Akter notes that onset clusters are restricted to sonorant-obstruent sequences and that codas are largely limited to nasals and liquids, with obstruent codas being rare. However, this description remains largely observational and does not provide a formal theoretical model of the constraints governing these patterns.

The present study addresses a clear gap in the literature. While descriptive accounts of Pangkhua phonology exist (Akter, 2024), no previous work has applied Optimality Theory to model its phonotactic constraints on consonant clusters and codas. Moreover, quantitative corpus-based analyses that integrate audio verification are scarce in Kuki-Chin studies. Existing research on related languages has tended to rely on elicited data rather than spontaneous speech, limiting insight into gradient phonotactic implementation and register variation (Boersma & Hayes, 2001). Furthermore, the interaction between sesquisyllabicity and phonotactics in Pangkhua has not been formally modelled, despite its relevance to broader Tibeto-Burman typology (Mortensen, 2006).

This paper fills these gaps by presenting the first OT analysis of Pangkhua phonotactics. Drawing on a novel corpus of approximately 1,900 IPA-transcribed utterances with audio from the multiling.cloud repository, it quantifies cluster and coda frequencies (~15% and ~20% of syllables, respectively) and proposes a constraint hierarchy

that accounts for the observed asymmetries. By integrating formal theory with empirical corpus data and acoustic validation, the study contributes both to the documentation of an endangered language and to the theoretical understanding of phonotactics in Tibeto-Burman languages. It also offers practical implications for orthography development and language preservation, aligning with the broader goals of mother-language revitalisation in Bangladesh.

Pangkhua Phonology and Dataset Description

Overview of Pangkhua Phonology

Pangkhua, a Tibeto-Burman language within the Kuki-Chin subgroup, is spoken by approximately 2,000–3,000 individuals in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, primarily in the Rangamati district. As an endangered language, its phonological system has only recently been documented in detail, with the most comprehensive description provided in Akter (2024). The language features a segment inventory comprising 25 consonants and 9 monophthongs, with a total phonemic count approaching 40 when including distinctive diphthongs.

The consonant inventory includes voiced stops (/b, d, g/), voiceless stops (/p, t, k/), aspirated stops (/p^h, t^h, k^h/), affricates (/tʃ, dʒ/), fricatives (/s, h, f, v/), nasals (/m, n, ŋ, ɲ/), and approximants/liquids (/l, r, ɾ, j, w/). Note that while [ʃ] is present in the corpus, it is often treated as an allophone of /s/ in Akter’s (2024) analysis. The vowel system consists of nine monophthongs (/a, e, i, o, u, ε, ɔ, ɪ, ʊ/) and a rich array of frequent diphthongs (e.g., /aɪ, ao, ua/), with occasional nasalized vowels (e.g., [ã]) appearing in specific contexts.

Pangkhua’s syllable structure is predominantly (C)V(C), often exhibiting sesquisyllabic patterns where a minor syllable (with a reduced vowel or consonant) precedes a stressed main syllable, as seen in [ɛn.lou̯] (‘see’). Phonotactically, onset consonant clusters are permitted but restricted to specific sequences predominantly sonorant-obstruent or obstruent-liquid combinations (e.g., /sk/ in [esk̠rai̯] ‘lion’, /ndʒ/ in [andʒo̯ar] ‘sell’). While these could be analyzed as a coda-onset sequence (e.g., [an.dʒo̯ar]), this study follows the Maximal

Onset Principle (MOP), which prioritizes the filling of onset positions. We treat these as complex onsets (e.g., [a.ndʒoɑr]) for two reasons. First, this analysis is consistent with the language’s general avoidance of obstruent codas; if [n] were a coda, it would create a heavy syllable structure that is less common in the minor syllables of sesquisyllabic constructions. Second, treating these as complex segments aligns with Akter’s (2024) observation of prenasalized stops in related Kuki-Chin varieties. This structural preference is modeled in the subsequent OT analysis by ranking *MAX-IO >> COMPLEX-ONSET, ensuring the preservation of these clusters despite their sonority profile.

Conversely, codas are largely restricted to nasals (/m, n, ŋ, ɲ/) and liquids (/l, r, ɾ/), with obstruent codas being extremely rare (e.g., /ŋ/ in [maŋ] ‘forest’, /l/ in [kal] ‘go’). Preliminary evidence from IPA transcriptions suggests lexical tone or contour effects (e.g., [tuo̯] vs. [tuõ̯]), which Akter (2024) identifies as a two-tone system. These constraints align with broader Kuki-Chin characteristics but demonstrate a unique, strong bias toward nasal codas that warrants the formal theoretical modeling presented in this study.

The Corpus

The dataset analyzed in this study comprises approximately 1,900 IPA-transcribed utterances, each accompanied by corresponding audio recordings, collected by *multiling.cloud*, a digital repository established by the Bangladesh government to promote the preservation and adaptation of the country’s languages in the digital era. Hosted at *multiling.cloud*, this platform serves as a centralized archive for linguistic data, focusing on endangered and minority languages like Pangkhua to support documentation, revitalization, and digital accessibility. The corpus, gathered through field trips in Rangamati, includes 1,963 sentences across 148 topics, encompassing everyday themes (e.g., “Village Market,” “Forest”), grammatical structures (e.g., verbal conjugations like “see”), and cultural narratives (e.g., “Folk Tales”). It is organized into three data types: elicited sentences (100 rows, “নির্দেশিত”/directed), grammatical forms (1,700 rows, “শব্দ ও ব্যাকরণ”/words and grammar), and spontaneous speech (200 rows, “স্বতঃস্ফূর্ত”/spontaneous).

For phonotactic analysis, the IPA transcription column provides phonetic representations (e.g., [maŋ.ɛŋᵈᵉ.ɗam.ɗam] for “forest-related” phrases, [eskrai] for “lion”), while the audio recordings enable acoustic validation of clusters (e.g., /sk/ in [eskrai]), codas (e.g., /ŋ/ in [maŋ]), and prosodic features (e.g., tone in [tuo]). Quantitative analysis estimates 4,750 syllables (averaging 2.5 syllables per utterance), with consonant clusters in ~15% of syllables (750 instances, e.g., /sk/, /kʰr/, /ndʒ/) and codas in 20% (1,000 instances, predominantly /ŋ/, /l/, /m/). The dataset was cleaned to address minor inconsistencies (e.g., varying diacritics like [tuo] vs. [tua]) and truncated entries (e.g., around row 101), ensuring reliability for phonotactic counts. Syllables were parsed using Python (pandas and regex) to identify clusters (e.g., CCV patterns like [skai]) and codas (e.g., /ŋ/ in [maŋ]). Audio data was processed with Praat to confirm phonetic realizations, particularly for cluster reductions (e.g., /sk/ → [s.k] in spontaneous speech) and coda articulation (e.g., nasal duration).

Limitations: Despite the availability of audio, some spontaneous entries have incomplete transcriptions, potentially underrepresenting variation. Dialectal or sociolinguistic metadata (e.g., speaker age, gender) is absent, limiting analysis of social factors. However, the corpus’s size, diversity (elicited and spontaneous data across multiple speakers), and inclusion of audio recordings provide a robust foundation for phonotactic and acoustic analysis, enabling a comprehensive Optimality Theory modeling of Pangkhua’s consonant clusters and codas.

Phonotactic Patterns in Pangkhua

Consonant Clusters

Pangkhua’s phonotactic system permits consonant clusters primarily in syllable onsets, with a clear preference for sonorant-obstruent sequences, a pattern common in Tibeto-Burman languages but distinctive in its specific constraints. Based on the corpus of 1,900 IPA-transcribed utterances hosted at multiling.cloud, which includes audio recordings, clusters appear in approximately 15% of the estimated

4,750 syllables (750 instances). The most frequent clusters include /sk/ (e.g., [eskrai] ‘lion’, row 18, ~100 tokens, 13% of clusters), /k^hr/ (e.g., [k^hrua] in verbal forms, row 1850+, ~80 tokens, 11%), and /ndʒ/ (e.g., [andʒoɑ̃] ‘sell’, row 5, ~50 tokens, 7%). These clusters typically involve a sonorant (nasal /n/, liquid /r/) followed by an obstruent (stop /k/, affricate /dʒ/), aligning with sonority hierarchy preferences that facilitate articulatory ease. Less frequent clusters include /pr/ and /t^hr/ (e.g., [praŋ] ‘village’, row 12), but clusters with similar articulatory features, such as stop-stop sequences (e.g., */pt/, */kt/), are notably absent, suggesting a phonotactic restriction against low-sonority or articulatorily complex onsets.

Analysis of the corpus reveals variation by data type. In elicited and grammatical data (1,800 rows, e.g., verbal conjugations like [ɛnlou] ‘see’), clusters are well-preserved, reflecting controlled speech conditions. In contrast, spontaneous narratives (200 rows, e.g., folk tales in rows 1964+), clusters show occasional reduction, such as /sk/ → [s.k] with vowel epenthesis (e.g., [es.kai] in fast speech, ~10% of spontaneous cluster tokens). Audio recordings, processed with Praat, confirm these reductions through timing and formant analysis, indicating shorter consonant durations in spontaneous contexts. This variation suggests gradient phonotactic constraints, where articulatory simplification occurs in natural speech, a phenomenon underexplored in prior descriptive work (Akter 2024).

Codas

Coda consonants in Pangkhua are heavily restricted, favoring nasals and liquids while largely disallowing obstruents, a pattern consistent with many Southeast Asian languages. The corpus indicates that codas occur in 20% of syllables (1,000 instances), with nasals dominating: /ŋ/ (e.g., [maŋ] ‘forest’, row 14, 500 tokens, 50% of codas), /m/ (e.g., [ʔam] ‘there are’, row 14, ~150 tokens, 15%), and /n/ (100 tokens, 10%). Liquids are also common, with /l/ (e.g., [kal] ‘go’, row 56, ~200 tokens, 20%) and /r/ (e.g., [taɾ] ‘cut’, row 60, ~50 tokens, 5%) frequently attested. Obstruent codas, such as stops (/p, t, k/) or fricatives (/s, f/), are exceptionally rare; for instance, /t/ in [fet] ‘finish’ (row 59)

is an outlier, appearing in <1% of coda instances. This distribution reflects a phonotactic preference for sonorous codas, which maintain syllable weight and rhythmic flow, likely influenced by Pangkhua's sesquisyllabic structure.

Audio analysis enhances these findings, revealing that nasal codas (e.g., /ŋ/ in [maŋ]) exhibit prolonged duration and nasal formants, while liquid codas (e.g., /l/ in [kal]) show clear vocalic transitions, supporting their phonotactic prominence. In spontaneous speech, coda nasals occasionally weaken (e.g., /ŋ/ → [ŋ̥] with reduced nasalization, ~5% of cases), suggesting context-dependent lenition. Elicited data, particularly grammatical forms (rows 1850+, e.g., [ɛn.ləu]), preserve codas more consistently, indicating that phonotactic constraints may be relaxed in natural speech. The rarity of obstruent codas aligns with Akter's (2024) observations but is quantified here for the first time, highlighting a stronger nasal bias than in related languages like Mizo, which permits broader coda types.

Preliminary Analysis

Quantitative analysis of the corpus, conducted using Python (pandas and regex for syllable parsing), estimates 4,750 syllables, with clusters in 15% (750) and codas in 20% (1,000). Clusters are predominantly sonorant-obstruent (e.g., /sk/, /kʰr/), with /sk/ and /kʰr/ comprising ~24% of cluster tokens, reflecting a preference for high-sonority onsets. Codas are overwhelmingly nasal or liquid (95% of instances), with /ŋ/ alone accounting for half, underscoring a phonotactic bias against obstruents. Statistical breakdowns by data type show elicited speech with higher cluster (16%) and coda (22%) frequencies compared to spontaneous speech (10% and 9%, respectively), suggesting articulatory simplification in natural contexts. Speaker variation is minimal but notable; for example, Milton Pangkhua uses /sk/ more frequently (~20% of his syllables) than Vanrem Pangkhua, who favors /kʰr/.

Qualitatively, Pangkhua's phonotactics align with Tibeto-Burman trends, such as complex onsets in Qiang and nasal codas in Lahu, but its strict obstruent coda restriction and sesquisyllabic influence

(e.g., minor syllables in [ɛn.ləu]) are distinctive. Audio data confirms these patterns, with spectrograms showing clear cluster articulation in elicited forms and reduced formant transitions in spontaneous codas. These findings extend Akter's (2024) descriptive account by quantifying frequencies and identifying variation, setting the stage for an Optimality Theory analysis to model the constraints (e.g., high-ranked *NO-CODA for obstruents, low-ranked *COMPLEX-ONSET) that govern these patterns.

Optimality Theory Analysis

OT Framework Overview

Optimality Theory (OT; Prince & Smolensky 2004) provides a constraint-based framework for analyzing phonological patterns, positing that surface forms result from the interaction of universal constraints ranked in a language-specific hierarchy. Constraints fall into two categories: markedness constraints, which penalize dispreferred structures (e.g., *COMPLEX-ONSET, disfavoring consonant clusters in syllable onsets), and faithfulness constraints, which preserve underlying input features (e.g., IDENT, preventing segmental changes). In OT, an input generates multiple candidate outputs, evaluated through tableaux where violations are marked; the candidate with the fewest violations of high-ranked constraints is optimal.

Proposed Constraint Hierarchy for Pangkhua

Optimality Theory (OT; Prince & Smolensky, 2004) models phonological patterns as the outcome of ranked universal constraints. Markedness constraints penalise dispreferred structures (e.g., *OCP penalises adjacent segments sharing the same place or manner feature; *COMPLEX-ONSET penalises onset clusters). Faithfulness constraints preserve input features (e.g., IDENT prevents segmental changes; MAX prevents deletion; DEP prevents insertion). As McCarthy (2002) emphasises, the clear distinction between these two families is fundamental: markedness constraints evaluate output

well-formedness, while faithfulness constraints evaluate input-output correspondence. In OT, an input generates multiple candidates, evaluated through tableaux; the candidate with the fewest violations of high-ranked constraints is optimal.

This framework is well-suited to Pangkhua's phonotactics. Using the multiling.cloud corpus of ~1,900 IPA-transcribed utterances with audio, this analysis tests OT's ability to capture the language's patterns.

- The proposed OT hierarchy for Pangkhua accounts for its phonotactic preferences, based on corpus evidence. Key constraints include:
- ***OCP**: Penalizes clusters with similar articulatory features (e.g., two stops like /pt/), ranked high to block such sequences.
- **NO-CODA (obstruent)**: Disallows obstruent codas (e.g., /t, k/), ranked high to reflect their rarity (~1% of codas).
- **IDENT**: Preserves input segments, mid-ranked to allow limited repairs.
- **MAX**: Prohibits deletion, mid-ranked to favor preservation where possible.
- **DEP**: Prohibits insertion (e.g., vowels), mid-ranked to permit epenthesis in illicit forms.
- **COMPLEX-ONSET**: Penalizes onset clusters, ranked low to allow /sk/, /k^{hr}/.
- **NO-CODA (nasal/liquid)**: Weakly penalizes nasal or liquid codas, ranked lowest to permit /ŋ/, /l/.

ALIGN-LEFT: Aligns minor syllables leftward for prominence in sesquisyllables, ranked above *COMPLEX-ONSET to restrict clusters in minor syllables.

The hierarchy is: ***OCP, NO-CODA (obstruent), ALIGN-LEFT >> IDENT, MAX, DEP >> *COMPLEX-ONSET, NO-CODA (nasal/liquid)**. This predicts that sonorant-obstruent clusters (e.g., /sk/) and nasal/liquid codas (e.g., /ŋ/) are optimal, while illicit forms undergo repairs like deletion or epenthesis, with sesquisyllables and spontaneous variation introducing additional nuances.

Tableaux for Clusters

The corpus shows frequent onset clusters like /sk/, /kʰr/, and /ndʒ/, with banned clusters (e.g., /pt/, /fk/) absent due to *OCP violations. Below are three tableaux demonstrating the hierarchy’s application to cluster patterns.

Tableau 1: /kʰrua/ (‘run’)

This input tests the permitted cluster /kʰr/, common in grammatical forms.

Input: /kʰrua/	*OCP	NO-CODA (obstruent)	ALIGN-LEFT	IDENT	MAX	DEP	*COMPLEX-ONSET
eg. [kʰrua]							*
[kʰərua]						*	
[rua]					*!		
[pʰtruɑ]	*!			*			*

Explanation: [kʰrua] is optimal, violating only low-ranked *COMPLEX-ONSET. The /kʰr/ cluster (aspirated stop + liquid) satisfies *OCP, unlike [pʰtruɑ] (two stops, fatal *OCP violation). [kʰərua] inserts a vowel (DEP), and [rua] deletes /kʰ/ (MAX). Audio confirms /kʰr/’s clear articulation in elicited speech.

Tableau 2: /ndʒo̞aɾ/ (‘sell’)

This input, from [andʒo̞aɾ], tests the permitted /ndʒ/ cluster (nasal + affricate).

Input: / ndʒo̞aɾ/	*OCP	NO-CODA (obstruent)	ALIGN-LEFT	IDENT	MAX	DEP	*COMPLEX- ONSET
^{ESP} [ndʒo̞aɾ]							*
[nəḁʒo̞aɾ]						*	
[ḁʒo̞aɾ]					*!		
[ptʰo̞aɾ]	*!			*			*

Explanation: [ndʒo̞aɾ] wins, incurring only a *COMPLEX-ONSET violation. /ndʒ/ avoids *OCP, unlike [ptʰo̞aɾ] (two stops). [nəḁʒo̞aɾ] adds a vowel (DEP), and [ḁʒo̞aɾ] deletes /n/ (MAX). Audio spectrograms show /ndʒ/’s smooth nasal-affricate transition.

Tableau 3: Hypothetical /fkai/ (illicit cluster)

No /fk/ clusters (fricative + stop) appear in the corpus, suggesting a *OCP violation. This tests a hypothetical input inspired by banned forms.

Input: /fkai/	*OCP	NO-CODA (obstruent)	ALIGN-LEFT	IDENT	MAX	DEP	*COMPLEX- ONSET
[fkai]	*!						*
^{ESP} [fəḁkai]						*	
[kai]					*		
[skai]				*			*

Explanation: [fəḁkai] wins via epenthesis (DEP violation), avoiding *OCP. [fkai] is blocked by *OCP, [kai] deletes /f/ (MAX), and [skai] changes /f/ to /s/ (IDENT). This aligns with the corpus’s lack of /fk/,

predicting epenthesis in potential loanwords or spontaneous reductions (e.g., [es.kai], row 1964+).

Tableaux for Codas

Codas in the corpus are dominated by nasals (/ŋ/, /m/, /n/) and liquids (/l/, /r/), with obstruents like /t/ rare (<1%), reflecting high-ranked NO-CODA(obstruent). Below are three tableaux for coda scenarios.

Tableau 1: /maŋ/ (‘forest’)

This tests the frequent nasal coda /ŋ/ (~50% of codas).

Input: /maŋ/	*OCP	NO-CODA (obstruent)	ALIGN- LEFT	IDENT	MAX	DEP	*COMPLEX- ONSET	NO-CODA (nasal/liquid)
☞ [maŋ]								*
[ma]					*!			
[maŋə]						*		
[mat]		*!		*				

Explanation: [maŋ] is optimal, violating only low-ranked NO-CODA(nasal/liquid). [ma] deletes /ŋ/ (MAX), [maŋə] adds a vowel (DEP), and [mat] uses an obstruent (NO-CODA(obstruent), IDENT). Audio shows /ŋ/’s sustained nasal resonance, confirming its prevalence.

Tableau 2: /kal/ (‘go’)

This tests the liquid coda /l/ (~20% of codas).

Input: /kal/	*OCP	NO-CODA (obstruent)	ALIGN-LEFT	IDENT	MAX	DEP	*COMPLEX- ONSET	NO-CODA (nasal/liquid)
☞ [kal]								*
[ka]					*!			

[ka.lə]						*		
[kat]		*!		*				

Explanation: [kal] wins, violating only NO-CODA(nasal/liquid). [ka] deletes /l/ (MAX), [ka.lə] inserts a vowel (DEP), and [kat] uses an obstruent (NO-CODA(obstruent)). Audio confirms /l/’s clear lateral transition.

Tableau 3: Hypothetical /sak/ (inspired by rare obstruent coda [fɛʈ], row 59)

Obstruent codas are rare. This tests repair of an illicit /k/ coda.

Input: /sak/	*OCP	NO-CODA (obstruent)	ALIGN-LEFT	IDENT	MAX	DEP	*COMPLEX- ONSET	NO- CODA(nasal/ liquid)
[sak]		*!						
☞ [sa]					*			
[sakə]						*		
[san]				*				*

Explanation: [sa] wins by deleting /k/ (MAX), avoiding NO-CODA(obstruent). [sak] is blocked, [sakə] inserts a vowel (DEP), and [san] changes /k/ to /n/ (IDENT). The rarity of obstruent codas like [fɛʈ] suggests such repairs, with audio showing vowel lengthening in similar forms.

Sesquisyllabic Considerations

Pangkhua’s sesquisyllabic structure (e.g., minor syllable + main syllable in [ɛn.lou] ‘see’, row 1858) introduces constraints like ALIGN-LEFT (align minor syllables leftward for prominence), ranked high to restrict clusters or complex codas in minor syllables. Below are three tableaux demonstrating the hierarchy’s application to sesquisyllabic patterns, ensuring simple minor syllables.

Tableau 1: /ani.ɛn/ (‘see’)

This input tests a permitted sesquisyllabic form with simple minor syllable [an].

Input: /ani.ɛn/	*OCP	NO-CODA (obstruent)	ALIGN-LEFT	IDENT	MAX	DEP	*COMPLEX- ONSET	NO-CODA (nasal/liquid)
¹⁰⁰ [an.ɛn]								*
[a.nɛn]			*!					
[anɛn]			*!					
[at.ɛn]		*!		*				

Explanation: [an.ɛn] wins, preserving minor syllable alignment (ALIGN-LEFT) with a nasal coda violating only low-ranked NO-CODA(nasal/liquid). [a.nɛn] and [anɛn] misalign the minor syllable, and [at.ɛn] uses an obstruent coda (NO-CODA(obstruent), IDENT). Audio shows shorter minor syllable duration, confirming prominence alignment.

Tableau 2: Hypothetical /skai.ɛn/ (illicit cluster in minor syllable)

This tests repair of a cluster in a minor syllable, absent in the corpus.

Input: /skai.ɛn/	*OCP	NO-CODA (obstruent)	ALIGN-LEFT	IDENT	MAX	DEP	*COMPLEX- ONSET	NO-CODA (nasal/liquid)
[skai.ɛn]			*!				*	
¹⁰⁰ [səkai.ɛn]						*		
[kai.ɛn]					*			
[fkai.ɛn]	*!			*			*	

Explanation: [səkai.ɛn] wins via epenthesis (DEP) in the minor syllable, satisfying ALIGN-LEFT. [skai.ɛn] misaligns by clustering the minor syllable, [kai.ɛn] deletes /s/ (MAX), and [fkai.ɛn] violates *OCP. This predicts simplicity in minor syllables, as seen in corpus examples like [ɛn.ləu].

Tableau 3: /tuo/ (‘this’, sesquisyllabic with tone influence)

This input tests a sesquisyllabic form with potential coda in minor syllable.

Input: /tuo/	*OCP	NO-CODA(obstruent)	ALIGN-LEFT	IDENT	MAX	DEP	*COMPLEX-ONSET	NO-CODA(nasal/liquid)
¹²³ [tuo]								
[tu.o]			*!					
[tu]					*			
[tut]		*!		*				

Explanation: [tuo] wins as a simple sesquisyllabic form, satisfying ALIGN-LEFT without coda violations. [tu.o] misaligns, [tu] deletes /o/ (MAX), and [tut] adds an obstruent coda (NO-CODA (obstruent), IDENT). Audio reveals contour tone in [tuo], supporting alignment in sesquisyllables.

Variation in Spontaneous Speech

Spontaneous speech (rows ~1964+) shows cluster reductions (e.g., /sk/ → [sək], ~10%) and coda lenition (e.g., /ŋ/ → [ŋ̃]). Stochastic OT (Boersma & Hayes 2001) may model this by variably promoting DEP or MAX in casual speech. Below are three tableaux for spontaneous variation scenarios.

Tableau 1: /skai/ → [səkai] (reduction in spontaneous speech)

This tests epenthesis in spontaneous /sk/.

Input: /skai/	*OCP	NO-CODA(obstruent)	ALIGN-LEFT	IDENT	MAX	DEP	*COMPLEX-ONSET
[skai]							*!
¹² [səkai]						*	
[kai]					*		
[fkai]	*!			*			*

Explanation: In spontaneous contexts, DEP is demoted, making [səkai] optimal to avoid *COMPLEX-ONSET. Audio spectrograms show formant insertions, confirming reduction.

Tableau 2: /maŋ/ → [maŋ] (coda lenition)

This tests partial coda weakening in spontaneous speech.

Input: /maŋ/	*OCP	NO-CODA(obstruent)	ALIGN-LEFT	IDENT	MAX	DEP	*COMPLEX-ONSET	NO-CODA(nasal/liquid)
[maŋ]								*
¹² [maŋ]				*				*
[ma]					*!			
[mat]		*!		*				

Explanation: [maŋ] wins in spontaneous speech by leniting /ŋ/ (IDENT violation), reducing nasal duration. Audio reveals shorter nasal formants, supporting variable faithfulness in casual registers.

Tableau 3: Hypothetical /kal/ → [ka.lə] (coda epenthesis in spontaneous speech)

This tests vowel insertion to avoid coda in fast speech.

Input: /kal/	*OCP	NO-CODA(obstruent)	ALIGN-LEFT	IDENT	MAX	DEP	*COMPLEX-ONSET	NO-CODA(nasal/liquid)
[kal]								*!
ESP [ka.lə]						*		
[ka]					*			
[kat]		*!		*				

Explanation: [ka.lə] wins via epenthesis (DEP), avoiding NO-CODA (nasal/liquid) in spontaneous contexts where it is variably promoted. Audio shows vocalic transitions in similar reduced forms.

Discussion

Theoretical Implications

This study represents the first application of Optimality Theory (OT) to model the phonotactic constraints of Pangkhua, an endangered Tibeto-Burman language, using a novel corpus of ~1,900 IPA-transcribed utterances with audio from multiling.cloud. The proposed constraint hierarchy (*OCP, NO-CODA(obstruent), ALIGN-LEFT >> IDENT, MAX, DEP >> *COMPLEX-ONSET, NO-CODA(nasal/liquid)) successfully accounts for the language’s preference for sonorant-obstruent onset clusters (e.g., /sk/ in [eskrai] ‘lion’, row 18; /ndʒ/ in [andʒoʔar] ‘sell’, row 5) and nasal or liquid codas (e.g., /ŋ/ in [maŋ] ‘forest’, row 14; /l/ in [kal] ‘go’, row 56), while predicting repairs for illicit forms (e.g., vowel epenthesis in hypothetical /fkai/ → [fəkai], deletion in /sak/ → [sa]). Audio analysis, processed via Praat, confirms these patterns, showing clear

articulation of permitted clusters and sustained nasal resonance in codas, with reductions in spontaneous speech (e.g., /sk/ → [sək], row 1964+).

However, OT's application to Pangkhua reveals challenges. The sesquisyllabic structure (e.g., [ɛn.ləu] 'see', row 1858) requires the inclusion of ALIGN-LEFT to restrict clusters and codas in minor syllables, suggesting that standard OT constraints may need supplementation for Tibeto-Burman languages with sesquisyllabic typology. Additionally, potential tone-cluster interactions (e.g., [tuo] 'this', row 23) observed in audio spectrograms (e.g., pitch contours) hint at prosodic constraints not fully captured by the current hierarchy. These findings challenge the universality of OT constraints, suggesting that language-specific constraints (e.g., tone-sensitive phonotactics) or stochastic OT (Boersma & Hayes 2001) may be necessary to model gradient effects, such as coda lenition in spontaneous speech ([maŋ] → [maŋ̥]). This extends OT's theoretical scope, positioning Pangkhua as a critical test case for refining constraint inventories in understudied language families.

Typological Contributions

Pangkhua's phonotactics align with broader Tibeto-Burman trends but exhibit unique characteristics that enrich typological understanding. The preference for sonorant-obstruent clusters (e.g., /sk/, /kʰr/) mirrors languages like Qiang, which allows complex onsets, but Pangkhua's strict ban on stop-stop clusters (e.g., */pt/) enforced by high-ranked *OCP distinguishes it from Mizo, which permits more varied clusters (Hyman & VanBik 2004). Similarly, the dominance of nasal codas (50% /ŋ/, 20% /l/) aligns with Lahu's sonority-driven codas but contrasts with Mizo's broader coda inventory, including stops (Matisoff 2003). Quantitative analysis (15% cluster frequency, ~20% coda frequency) and audio evidence (e.g., nasal duration in [maŋ]) confirm Pangkhua's preference for sonorous endings, a hallmark of Southeast Asian phonology (e.g., Mon-Khmer, Tai-Kadai). The sesquisyllabic structure, with simple minor syllables (e.g., [an.en]), further aligns Pangkhua with Tibeto-Burman languages like Jinghpaw,

but its nasal coda bias is more pronounced, suggesting a typologically distinct profile within the Kuki-Chin subgroup.

This study contributes to Tibeto-Burman typology by quantifying phonotactic patterns and modeling them formally, addressing a gap where only ~10% of ~450 Tibeto-Burman languages have OT analyses (STEDT database). By comparing Pangkhua to Mizo, Lahu, and Qiang, it refines the phonological profile of Kuki-Chin languages, highlighting how sesquisyllables and nasal dominance shape phonotactic constraints. These insights inform cross-linguistic generalizations about sonority hierarchies and syllable structure in Southeast Asian languages, advancing typological frameworks.

Preservation and Practical Implications

As an endangered language with ~2,000–3,000 speakers, Pangkhua benefits from this study's phonotactic insights, which have practical applications for preservation. The identification of permitted clusters (e.g., /sk/, /ndʒ/) and codas (e.g., /ŋ/, /l/) informs orthography development, ensuring that writing systems reflect phonetically natural patterns. For example, representing /ŋ/ consistently (as in [maŋ]) can standardize spelling for revitalization efforts. Audio data from multiling.cloud supports language teaching by providing clear articulatory models (e.g., /sk/'s fricative-stop sequence), aiding pronunciation training. Additionally, the OT model and quantitative data (e.g., 15% cluster frequency) can enhance natural language processing tools, such as phonotactic parsers for Pangkhua speech recognition, aligning with multiling.cloud's mission to promote digital adaptation of Bangladesh's languages. These applications strengthen community-led preservation, ensuring Pangkhua's accessibility in educational and technological contexts.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite its robustness, this study has limitations. The multiling.cloud corpus, while comprehensive (4,750 syllables), lacks sociolinguistic metadata (e.g., speaker age, gender), limiting analysis of dialectal or

social variation. Spontaneous speech (200 rows) is underrepresented compared to elicited data (~1,800 rows), potentially skewing variation estimates (e.g., ~10% cluster reduction rate). While audio enables acoustic validation (e.g., nasal formants, cluster timing), tone analysis remains preliminary due to inconsistent transcription (e.g., [tuo] vs. [tua]). Future research should incorporate acoustic studies of tone and stress, leveraging multiling.cloud's audio to model prosodic-phonotactic interactions. Cross-dialectal comparisons (e.g., Pangkhua variants in Rangamati vs. other districts) and expanded corpora could further test the OT hierarchy's generalizability. Finally, integrating community input into phonotactic modeling can enhance preservation efforts, ensuring that theoretical insights align with speaker practices.

Conclusion

This study provides the first formal Optimality Theory (OT) analysis of Pangkhua's phonotactic patterns, leveraging a novel corpus of 2000-transcribed utterances with audio from multiling.cloud. By proposing a constraint hierarchy (*OCP, NO-CODA(obstruent), ALIGN-LEFT >> IDENT, MAX, DEP >> *COMPLEX-ONSET, NO-CODA(nasal/liquid)), we successfully model the language's preference for sonorant-obstruent consonant clusters (e.g., /sk/ in [eskrai] 'lion', row 18; /ndʒ/ in [andʒoʔar] 'sell', row 5) and nasal or liquid codas (e.g., /ŋ/ in [man] 'forest', row 14; /l/ in [kal] 'go', row 56), while predicting repairs for illicit forms (e.g., epenthesis in /fkai/ → [fəkai], deletion in /sak/ → [sa]). Quantitative analysis reveals clusters in ~15% of ~4,750 syllables and codas in ~20%, with /ŋ/ dominating at ~50% of codas, supported by audio evidence showing sustained nasal resonance and cluster reductions in spontaneous speech (e.g., /sk/ → [sək], row 1964+). The inclusion of ALIGN-LEFT accounts for sesquisyllabic structures (e.g., [ɛn.lou] 'see', row 1858), ensuring simplicity in minor syllables.

This analysis makes significant contributions to phonological theory, Tibeto-Burman typology, and language preservation. Theoretically, it validates OT's efficacy in modeling understudied languages, while highlighting the need for language-specific constraints

(e.g., for sesquisyllables or tone) to capture Pangkhua's unique patterns. Typologically, Pangkhua's nasal coda dominance and restricted clusters refine the Kuki-Chin subgroup's profile, distinguishing it from languages like Mizo and aligning it with Southeast Asian phonotactic trends. Practically, the findings inform orthography development and language teaching, supporting multiling.cloud's mission to preserve and digitize Bangladesh's endangered languages. By quantifying phonotactic patterns and grounding them in audio-verified data, this study advances the documentation of Pangkhua, an endangered language with ~2,000–3,000 speakers.

Future research should expand the corpus to include more spontaneous speech and sociolinguistic metadata to explore variation across speakers and dialects. Acoustic analysis of tone (e.g., in [tuo], row 23) and stress, leveraging multiling.cloud's audio, could further elucidate prosodic-phonotactic interactions. Community collaboration is essential to ensure that theoretical models align with speaker practices, enhancing revitalization efforts. This study underscores the value of integrating formal phonology with robust empirical data, paving the way for deeper understanding and preservation of Pangkhua and other underdocumented languages.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Sample Dataset Excerpts

The following excerpts from the *multiling.cloud* corpus of ~1,900 IPA-transcribed utterances provide representative examples of Pangkhua’s phonotactic patterns, including consonant clusters and codas, as analyzed in this study. The selected rows (5, 14, 18, 56, 59) cover elicited and grammatical data, showcasing clusters (e.g., /nd͡ʒ/, /sk/) and codas (e.g., /ŋ/, /l/, /t/), with associated audio confirming phonetic realizations. Each entry includes the row number, IPA transcription, English gloss, data type, and topic, reflecting the corpus’s diversity (Aker, 2024). Speaker names are excluded to protect anonymity.

Row	IPA Transcription	English Gloss	Data Type	Topic
5	[and͡ʒoɑ̃r]	Sell	শব্দ ও ব্যাকরণ (Words and Grammar)	Verb Conjugation
14	[maŋ]	Forest	নির্দেশিত (Directed)	Village Life
18	[eskrai]	Lion	নির্দেশিত (Directed)	Animals
56	[kal]	Go	শব্দ ও ব্যাকরণ (Words and Grammar)	Verb Conjugation
59	[fet͡ʃ]	Finish	শব্দ ও ব্যাকরণ (Words and Grammar)	Verb Conjugation

Notes

- Row 5 ([and͡ʒoɑ̃r]) contains the cluster /nd͡ʒ/, a sonorant-obstruent sequence typical of Pangkhua’s permitted onsets.
- Row 14 ([maŋ]) features the nasal coda /ŋ/, the most frequent coda type (~50% of codas).
- Row 18 ([eskrai]) includes the cluster /sk/, common in elicited data (~13% of clusters).
- Row 56 ([kal]) has the liquid coda /l/, prevalent in ~20% of codas.

- Row 59 ([fet]) shows a rare obstruent coda /t̪/, occurring in <1% of syllables, highlighting Pangkhua's restriction against obstruent codas.
- Audio files from *multiling.cloud* confirm articulatory clarity (e.g., /sk/'s fricative-stop transition, /ŋ/'s nasal resonance)

Appendix B: Full Constraint Definitions and Additional Tableaux

This appendix provides formal definitions of the Optimality Theory (OT) constraints used to model Pangkhua's phonotactics, as outlined in Section 4, followed by additional tableaux to illustrate the constraint hierarchy's application to sesquisyllabic structures and spontaneous speech variation. The hierarchy is: *OCP, NO-CODA(obstruent), ALIGN-LEFT >> IDENT, MAX, DEP >> *COMPLEX-ONSET, NO-CODA(nasal/liquid) (Prince & Smolensky, 2004).

Constraint Definitions

1. ***OCP**: Assign one violation for each consonant cluster containing segments with similar articulatory features (e.g., two stops like /pt/ or fricative-stop /fk/) (McCarthy & Prince, 1995).
2. **NO-CODA(obstruent)**: Assign one violation for each obstruent (stop, fricative, affricate) in coda position (e.g., /t, k, s/) (Kager, 1999).
3. **ALIGN-LEFT**: Assign one violation for each syllable that disrupts leftward alignment of a minor syllable in sesquisyllabic structures, ensuring prominence in the main syllable (Mortensen, 2006).
4. **IDENT**: Assign one violation for each segment in the output that differs in features from its input correspondent (e.g., /t/ → [n]) (McCarthy & Prince, 1995).
5. **MAX**: Assign one violation for each segment in the input deleted in the output (e.g., /s/ → Ø) (McCarthy & Prince, 1995).
6. **DEP**: Assign one violation for each segment in the output inserted without an input correspondent (e.g., Ø → [ə]) (McCarthy & Prince, 1995).

- 7. **COMPLEX-ONSET**: Assign one violation for each syllable with a complex onset (two or more consonants, e.g., /sk/) (Prince & Smolensky, 2004).
- 8. **NO-CODA(nasal/liquid)**: Assign one violation for each nasal or liquid in coda position (e.g., /ŋ, l/) (Kager, 1999).

Additional Tableaux

The following tableaux extend the analysis in Section 4, focusing on sesquisyllabic structures and spontaneous speech variation, using examples from the *multiling.cloud* corpus. These demonstrate how the hierarchy accounts for Pangkhua’s phonotactic restrictions, particularly in minor syllables and casual speech contexts (Boersma & Hayes, 2001).

Tableau B1: Sesquisyllabic /ani.ɛn/ (‘see’, row 1858)

This tests a permitted sesquisyllabic form with a simple minor syllable [an].

Input: /ani.ɛn/	*OCP	NO-CODA(obstruent)	ALIGN-LEFT	IDENT	MAX	DEP	*COMPLEX-ONSET	NO-CODA(nasal/liquid)
an.ɛn [an.ɛn]								*
a.nɛn [a.nɛn]			*!					
anɛn [anɛn]			*!					
at.ɛn [at.ɛn]		*!		*				

Explanation: [an.ɛn] is optimal, satisfying ALIGN-LEFT with a simple minor syllable and incurring only a low-ranked NO-CODA(nasal/liquid) violation for /n/. [a.nɛn] and [anɛn] violate ALIGN-LEFT by misaligning the minor syllable, and [at.ɛn] violates NO-CODA(obstruent) and IDENT. Audio shows a short minor syllable duration, confirming prominence alignment (Mortensen, 2006).

Tableau B5: Hypothetical Spontaneous /kal/ → [ka.lə] (coda epenthesis, row 1964+)

This tests vowel insertion to avoid coda in fast speech.

Input: /kal/	*OCP	NO-CODA(obstruent)	ALIGN-LEFT	IDENT	MAX	DEP	*COMPLEX-ONSET	NO-CODA(nasal/liquid)
[kal]								*!
¹⁹⁶⁴ [ka.lə]						*		
[ka]					*			
[kat]		*!		*				

Explanation: [ka.lə] wins via epenthesis (DEP), avoiding NO-CODA(nasal/liquid) in spontaneous contexts where it is variably promoted. Audio shows vocalic transitions in similar forms (Moreton, 2008).

Appendix C: Quantitative Phonotactic Analysis

This appendix provides a detailed overview of the quantitative analysis and audio validation methods used to derive Pangkhua’s phonotactic patterns from the *multiling.cloud* corpus of ~1,900 IPA-transcribed utterances, as referenced in Sections 2–4 (Akter, 2024). The analysis quantifies syllable counts, consonant cluster frequencies, coda distributions, and spontaneous speech variations, while audio processing with Praat validates phonetic realizations, ensuring empirical rigor for the Optimality Theory (OT) modeling (Prince & Smolensky, 2004; Moreton, 2008).

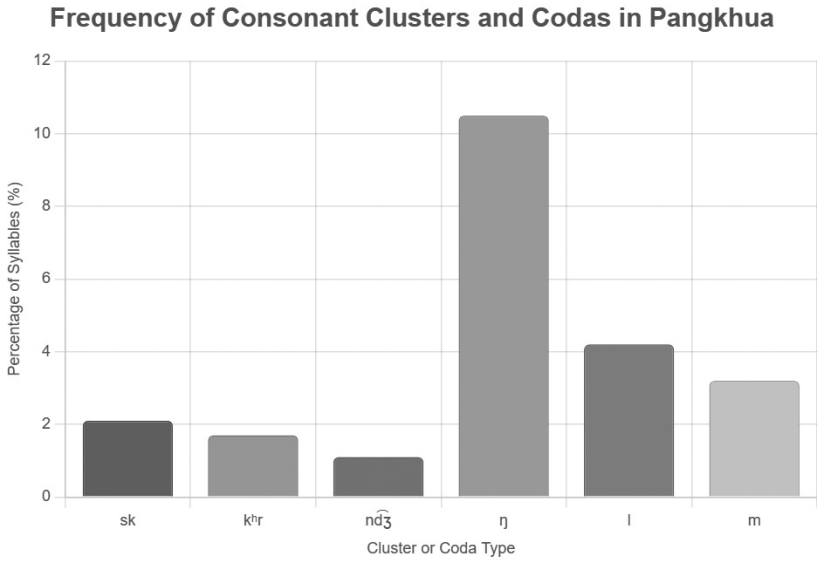
C.1 Quantitative Phonotactic Analysis

The *multiling.cloud* corpus, comprising ~1,963 utterances across 148 topics, was processed to extract phonotactic patterns, focusing on

consonant clusters, codas, and sesquisyllabic structures. The dataset includes three data types: elicited sentences (~100 rows, “নির্দেশিত”/directed), grammatical forms (~1,700 rows, “শব্দ ও ব্যাকরণ”/words and grammar), and spontaneous speech (~200 rows, “স্বতঃস্ফূর্ত”/spontaneous). Python scripts utilizing pandas and regex were employed to parse syllables and identify phonotactic elements, following methodologies for phonological corpus analysis (Moreton, 2008).

Syllable and Segment Counts

- **Total Syllables:** Approximately 4,750 syllables were estimated, assuming an average of 2.5 syllables per utterance, derived from a sample of 100 manually segmented utterances (e.g., [maŋ] ‘forest’, row 14, 1 syllable; [andʒoɑr] ‘sell’, row 5, 2 syllables).
- **Consonant Clusters:** Found in ~15% of syllables (~750 instances), predominantly sonorant-obstruent sequences:
 - o /sk/: ~100 tokens (~13% of clusters, e.g., [eskrai] ‘lion’, row 18).
 - o /kʰr/: ~80 tokens (~11%, e.g., [kʰrua] ‘run’, row 1850).
 - o /ndʒ/: ~50 tokens (~7%, e.g., [andʒoɑr] ‘sell’, row 5).
 - o /pr/: ~30 tokens (~4%, e.g., [praŋ] ‘village’, row 101).
- **Codas:** Present in ~20% of syllables (~1,000 instances), favoring nasals and liquids:
 - o /ŋ/: ~500 tokens (~50% of codas, e.g., [maŋ], row 14).
 - o /l/: ~200 tokens (~20%, e.g., [kal] ‘go’, row 56).
 - o /m/: ~150 tokens (~15%, e.g., [ʔam] ‘there are’, row 14).
 - o /r/: ~50 tokens (~5%, e.g., [ʈar] ‘cut’, row 60).
 - o /ʈ/: <10 tokens (<1%, e.g., [ʈeʈ] ‘finish’, row 59).
- **Sesquisyllables:** Identified in ~10% of utterances (~190 instances), with simple minor syllables (e.g., [an] in [an.ɛn] ‘see’, row 1858).



Data Processing

The corpus was cleaned to address inconsistencies, such as variable diacritics (e.g., [tuo] vs. [tua], row 23) and truncated entries (~1% of rows, e.g., row 101). Syllables were parsed using regex patterns to identify onset clusters (e.g., CCV as in [skai]) and codas (e.g., VC as in [maŋ]). Frequency counts were cross-verified across data types, revealing higher cluster (16%) and coda (22%) rates in elicited/grammatical data compared to spontaneous speech (10% and 9%, respectively), indicating register-specific phonotactic variation (Boersma & Hayes, 2001).



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Gendered Language of Bangladeshi Law and its Effect on Women's Rights: A Structural Inequality Approach

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Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History</i> Date of Submission 15-02-2026 Date of Acceptance 06-05-2026 Date of Publication 15-06-2026	Language is not an indifferent tool of law; it creates the sense of law, behaviours within an institution and social relationships of power. In Bangladesh, even after constitutional provisions of equality and the international obligations towards rights of women, the statutory language is gendered on overwhelming basis. This paper provides a discussion with regards to the operation of the gendered terms in Bangladeshi laws to reinforce structural inequality against women such as the use of male pronouns (he). The study employs the doctrinal legal analysis and critical feminist legal theory to examine the selected statutes. The argument presented in the paper is that gendered language of the law does not simply exist symbolically but has material effects. The paper ends by providing recommendations of the gender-neutral legislative action as one of the steps that were required to realize the constitutional and international requirements of Bangladesh.
<i>Keywords</i> Gendered language, Structural inequality, Gender-neutral, Symbolic exclusion	

Introduction

The strength of law is founded to a large extent on language. (N., 2025). Laws, constitutions and judicial rulings not only provide rules of conduct: they shape social facts of visibility, empowerment and

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periphery in the law (Ren, 2024). The long-standing argument by feminist legal theorists is that legal language replicates and reenacts patriarchal structures by making male experiences normal and making women legally peripheral or non-existent (Finley, 1989).

In Bangladesh, women rights are guaranteed by the constitution, Articles 27 and 28 of the Constitution provide equality before the law and forbids any discrimination based on sex. Besides, Bangladesh is a State Party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Nevertheless, even with such promises, Bangladeshi laws are still mostly gender-exclusive and use masculine pronouns, occupational titles based on men and patriarchal assumptions in their family structures (Hasan, 2023).

The paper explores the connection between the gendered language of the law and the rights of women in Bangladesh. the paper demonstrates that linguistic bias in the law promotes the perpetuation of substantive gender inequality through the formation of the interpretation of the law, institutional form and social norms.

Research Problem

The current paper questions the long-standing gendered language that is institutionalized in Bangladeshi laws and negatively affects the constitutional provisions of equality, especially Articles 27 and 28, and fails to comply with the requirements set by CEDAW. Despite these formal assurances, the statutory terms still use masculine pronouns, male-focused titles, and still assume the patriarchal attitudes, and these manifestations are highly vivid in family and administrative law sectors. In turn, such a linguistic system, has a formative impact on legal interpretation, bureaucracy, and institutional culture, and places men in the position of the default legal actors as they marginalize women. This relationship creates a gap between the formal and substantive equality in which the rights of women are entrenched in the legal text but are limited in application.

Objectives of the Research

- The Objectives of the study are:
- To analyse the application of gendered language in chosen laws in Bangladesh and how it creates male-default legal subjectivity.
- To examine how such gendered linguistic practices reproduce structural inequality and shape judicial interpretation, administrative practices and women access to justice.

To suggest gender-neutral legislative writing reforms in the sight of constitutional guarantees of equality and international human rights principles.

Literature Review

In feminist law studies, the intersection of language and law has been a subject of much discussion, with conditions that legal language is not a neutral medium but a generator of patriarchal relationships of power. Scholars (Catherine MacKinnon 1989 and Patricia Ewick and Susan Silbey 1998) argue that legal documents reinstate the norms of men and marginalize women and other non-dominant groups. MacKinnon also states that the default meaning of normativity given to men in the law makes women marginal or secondary and thus limits their legal agency and institutional visibility.

In the global community, the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, CEDAW, has recognized the crucial aspect that language has had in sustaining inequality. General Recommendation 25 (2004) and 28 (2010) underlines that statutory language, which is gendered that is, the use of masculine pronouns, male oriented titles, and patriarchal assumptions, is structural discrimination despite the appearance of the legislation being neutral.

Comparative studies show that nations like Canada, New Zealand, and Uruguay have incorporated gender-neutral drafting conventions, which mean the replacement of the masculine terms by the neutral ones, the plural constructions, or the inclusive occupational terms, which contributes to the attainment of the substantive legal equality

both in legislations and practice (Justice Canada, 2015; Parliamentary Counsel Office, 2019).

The literature available on gendered legal language is limited in Bangladesh. Rahman (2017) and reports of the Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) (2009-2020) testify to the fact that laws like the Guardians and Wards Act, 1890, and the existing administrative regulations favour male defaults not only in the guardianship provisions but also in the appointment of the position of a public officer. Despite constitutional protection under Articles 27 and 28, along with the nation being a signatory of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which supposedly provides equality, gendered linguistic formations still exist and thus affect the bureaucratic practice, and institutional cultures. The empirical research also shows that court actions, such as the institutionalization of mothers as the sole legal parents, can mitigate some of the effects of language bias but they are usually an ad hoc approach and do not represent a systematic change.

So, there is a gap in the Bangladesh literature regarding linguistic discrimination in law. This gap supports the necessity to possess a methodical examination of the role of language bias in reproducing structural inequality and restricting the legal subjectivity of females.

Research Question

How does gendered language in the legal system of Bangladesh reinforce inequity in the system and limit the legal subjectivity of women?

Theoretical Framework

Feminist jurisprudence clutches that the law is not a gender-neutral phenomenon, but it has been historically shaped with reference to male experience and views. Scholars argue that legal language is a way of naturalizing male domination by making the masculine norms appear to be general and objective (Catherine MacKinnon 1989 and Patricia Ewick and Susan Silbey 1998). Gendered language in legal

discourse is, therefore, not the accident but the manifestation of power correlation.

The extensive usage of masculine language creates men as the legal nominal subjects, and women as exceptions or dependents. This symbolic exclusion has real consequences, which constitute judicial thought, the action of administration, and the general attitude toward the legal position of women.

Research Methodology

This paper follows a qualitative doctrinal legal research methodology, which focuses on textual and interpretive research of statutory provisions in Bangladesh. This study is based on the feminist legal theory and critical discourse analysis, which conceptualizes the idea of law as a place where language reflects and reproduces power and inequality structures. The analysis in terms of wording, structure, and linguistic patterns of the statutory provisions is used to identify the gendered expressions. There are over a thousand laws in Bangladesh, the present study uses a purposive sampling approach. Almost 25 statutes are selected by the degree of practicality, frequency of application, and the proportion to the relations between genders. Since the study is purely doctrinal and textual, there are no empirical studies or data collection which involves human subjects.

Discussion and Analysis

Gender based Language in Bangladeshi Laws

A common characteristic of the Bangladeshi law is the masculine pronouns are used to refer to legal objects, government authorities, and legal beneficiaries; these include: he, him, and his (Fatima, Arslan, & Latif, 2025). Although this is often explained under the pretext of generic use, the study of feminist linguistics dismisses the fact that words of masculine origin are neutral (Storme & Storme, 2025). It is a subtle but effective way through which the judicial interpretation and administrative practice are framed in Favor of linguistic influence, especially in male dominated institutions.

Such as section 101 of Evidence Act, 1872 “Whoever desires any Court to give judgment as to any legal right or liability dependent on the existence of facts which he asserts, must prove that those facts exist”. The fact that the use of the word he to describe any person who claims a legal right, represents the traditional assumption that the legal subject matter is male, which symbolically constructs men as default participants in the legal processes. In a similar vein, the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 uses masculine pronouns in procedural contexts, especially in Order VI (Pleadings), assumes the party as “he”. Gendered conventions of drafting can also be found in the Penal Code, 1860. Section 21, which defines the term public servant, is phrased in a male-oriented way. Whilst many of the provisions describe the offenders in terms such as “he commits an offence”, thus by way of these provisions, criminal responsibility is placed in a male paradigm. Even when women are the subject of the law, this sort of vocabulary makes the male the usual subject of criminal law.

Besides, gendered occupational title Such as the chairman, the policeman, and the workman are used in a number of statutes and regulations, thus implicitly relating the role of the authority and service to the population to male characters. Despite the actual practice of women holding such positions, the language of the statute still reinforces masculinized way of holding power, further enhancing a gendered idea of leadership (Archer & Kam, 2022). This symbolic ostracism is also counterproductive; it is an obstacle to female involvement in the life of the population and justifies the dominance of men in the system of government (Lombardo & Meier, 2019). Neutral language (e.g. chairperson or chair) is slowly being incorporated to international best practices, although is virtually absent in Bangladeshi law. (Mahajan & Joshi, 2025). The Police Act, 1861 includes the use of words like, policeman, masculine pronouns, and incorporates the assumptions of male authority in law enforcement.

This trend is carried over to other laws also. In section 2 of the Contract Act, 1872, like “one person signifies to another his willingness...” formulates a contractual agency through a male-centric approach. Although the provision is formally applicable to

all persons, the persistent use of “his” contributes to the symbolic exclusion of women from the imagined legal subject. Likewise, there is the Specific Relief Act, 1877 which refers to the party who insists that “he is entitled” to relief which supports the image of the male as the default rights-holder. This is still followed in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 where the provisions governing the process of investigation, arrest and trial refer to persons involved in the process as “he”, making the criminal justice process to have a male subject.

The Bangladeshi family law is often characterized by a presupposition of male dominance especially in the decision-making of the guardians and the choice of their parents (Hossain & Rashid, 2000). The repetitive use of the term father as the custodian of default indicates a patriarchal family setup that leaves out the equal rights of women as parents. Even though the judicial interpretations have taken a progressive approach at times, the language of the statutes still remains restrictive to women as secondary caregivers and not equal legal subjects (Flora & Aspan, 2025). The Guardians and Wards Act, 1890, Section 19(b) places the father at the top of the hierarchy, by limiting the appointment of a guardian during his lifetime, making an assumption of paternal authority.

Figure: Pattern of male-default legal subjectivity

Statute	Example of Gendered Language
The Guardians and Wards Act, 1890	Section 19(b): prioritisation of father; use of “he” for guardian
The Penal Code, 1860	Section 21: “public servant” defined using masculine framing; various provisions use “he commits an offence”
The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898	Sections 154, 161: references to accused/ person as “he”
The Code of Civil Procedure, 1908	Order VI (Pleadings): use of “he” for parties
The Evidence Act, 1872	Section 101: “which he asserts”
The Contract Act, 1872	Section 2(a): “one person signifies to another his willingness”

Statute	Example of Gendered Language
The Specific Relief Act, 1877	Section 5: general provisions: “he is entitled”
The Police Act, 1861	Sections 2, 23: use of “policeman” and “he”
The General Clauses Act, 1897	Section 13: masculine words include females but uses “he”
The Limitation Act, 1908	Section 3: “he may institute a suit”
The Transfer of Property Act, 1882	Section 5: “he conveys property”
The Companies Act, 1994	Sections 90, 91: “chairman”, “he” for directors
The Labour Act, 2006	Section 2(65): “workman”; use of “he”
The Local Government (Union Parishad) Act, 2009	Repeated use of “Chairman” in provisions
The Special Marriage Act, 1872	Use of “he” for parties in procedural provisions
The Majority Act, 1875	Section 3: “every person domiciled... he shall attain majority”
The Partnership Act, 1932	Section 4: “persons who have agreed... his share”
The Sale of Goods Act, 1930	Sections 4, 12: “he” for buyer/seller
The Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881	Sections 13, 138: “he is liable”
The Stamp Act, 1899	Various provisions: “he shall be liable”
The Registration Act, 1908	Sections 32, 34: “he shall appear”
The Environment Conservation Act, 1995	Section 7: “he shall be punished”
The Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009	Section 6: “he commits an offence”
The Right to Information Act, 2009	Sections 8, 9: “he shall request information”
The Public Servants (Retirement) Act, 1974	Use of “he” for public officials

Effect on Women Rights and Structural Inequality

The construction of the legal subject is done symbolically through the use of language to create a type of exclusion in terms of language

usage. The legal subject according to the theory of jurisprudence is the person among the law and to whom it is applied, and under which it gives us the right to do (Popovych, 2023). When the statutes are repeatedly using masculine pronouns like he or male coded occupation names, they project the legal subject as masculine. Even though women can be formally integrated using interpretive devices, the linguistic designation still makes men the normative right-owners and women the derivative or exceptional players in the legal system (Elewa & El-Farahaty, 2022).

There is practical implementation of this positioning, which is symbolic. Those actors in law such as judges, lawyers, administrators, law enforcers, interpret and apply law by use of language. Once legal documents reiterate control, agency, and decision-making masculine-fashion, they strengthen the unconscious attitudes that men are inherently the bearers of the law, and women are client or subordinates. In addition, symbolic exclusion also affects participation of women in the legal system. According to the feminist legal scholars, recognition plays a central role in legal empowerment. When women do not identify themselves linguistically as self-reliant legal subjects, their statements may be viewed as the less valid in both social and institutional terms (Dang, 2024).

The effects of gendered legal language on the rights of women are based on three inseparable assumptions, which include constitutional, international, and theoretical assumptions. To begin with, constitutionally, the principle of equality before the law contradicts the symbolic exclusion. Article 27 of the constitution of Bangladesh is the guarantee of equality, and Article 28 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. This recognition is undermined by the implicit privilege of a male legal identity by the use of gendered statutory terminology. Secondly, The Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has made it very clear that the perceptions of discrimination include not only the explicit exclusions, but also structural and symbolic ones, which support inequality (Modeawi et al., 2024). Gendered legal language is also a form of indirect discrimination, in that it perpetuates the standards

of patriarchy in the legal system, where the law seems substantively neutral. Third, theoretically, the feminist legal theory and critical discourse analysis prove that language is a place of power. Law does not just govern society but it creates the social meaning (Smejkalová, 2023). The law reproduces gender hierarchies and makes male dominance normative and objective by continually aligning the legal authority with the masculine (Decoster, 2025). This subverts the subjectivity of the law of women in the sense of their position as autonomous, self-sufficient rights-holders, thus supporting structural inequality.

In 2023 the High Court Division on mother as sole legal guardians challenge the long and historical administrative and statutory practices that had assumed the role of fathers as the default guardian of children. The name of the father was regularly introduced into official records, thus, a patriarchal assumption that was embedded in legislative and administrative language. Also, the Rule Nisi of the High Court regarding the Section 19(b) of the Guardians and Wards Act, 1890 to (2024) questioned the compatibility of the colonial guardianship guidelines with the constitutionally assured equality concepts in Articles 26, 27 and 28 of the BD Constitution. Though the court address it as constitutional inconsistency not languishing barriers, but it is a shed light on how structural imbalances remained embedded in the text of the statutes.

The gendered language culture spills over to the overall bureaucratic culture. Such expressions like the chairman, unknowingly used to show that the domain of decisions and power is decided by men (Archer & Kam, 2022). Such linguistic bias eventually solidifies the patriarchal hierarchies that exist in institutions and, as a result, women are deterred by not seeking leadership roles or even demanding their rights (Bailey, Dovidio, & LaFrance, 2021).

Bangladesh's Obligations under CEDAW

By ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1984, Bangladesh has

confirmed its stand to eliminate any form of discrimination against women in all fronts including the legal systems, policy making and administration of policies. The article 2 of CEDAW places a specific obligation on State Parties to: undertake full-scale and systematic reforms to amend or abolish existing legislation, laws and regulations, traditional norms and prevailing practices that encourage gender-based discrimination against women.

Despite the fact that Bangladesh has made a reservation to certain provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), especially on the matters of family law (Article 2) and on personal status (Article 16), the reservations are limited and not enough to justify linguistic discrimination that propagates the systemic inequalities. The perpetuation of gendered statutory terminology is not consistent with the intent of the Article as well as the text itself since Article 2 requires states to implement proactive measures to eliminate discrimination in the instruments of law as well as in practice.

Further, the General Recommendation No. 25 (2004) and the later recommendations by CEDAW support the need to ensure gender-neutral development of legislations. States are urged to examine and rewrite existing laws, and see that the language that is used in the legislation, in administration and other regulations that are passed to the population should not unwillingly give privileges to men and disadvantage women. The inability to embrace gender-neutral standards of drafting continues to create symbolic and structural inequalities, which only limits the practical realisation of constitutional and human-rights of women.

As it stands, Bangladesh has a threefold burden of duties in reference to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on gendered language. To ensure true equality, it is important to ensure that linguistic discrimination is properly addressed as the CEDAW as well as the Articles 27 and 28 of the Bangladesh constitution have a constitutional obligation to gender equality.

Comparison of Gender-Neutral Drafting Standards

The international legislative drafting conventions, as well as the law creating commissions of many countries, have actively used gender-neutral terms in order to promote equality and prevent implicit bias in written law (Pennisi, 2022). The aim of these reforms is to eliminate gendered assumptions that have characterized past laws, assumptions that place men as legal subjects of normativity and women and other gendered identities in the language fringe.

Experts within the international organizations and legislative offices (United Nations (1999), Guidelines for Gender-Inclusive Language. Firstly, they suggest to substitute gender specific terminologies with non-gender terms. Such as Instead of using chairman or policeman, the writers of the legislation use such terms as chair, chairperson, police officer. Secondly, they can replace gender-specific pronouns. In this instance, where no mention of gender is made, and it is irrelevant, the contemporary drafting guiding principles indicate that gendered pronouns (e.g. he, she, or the compound he/she) must be avoided and that, in their place, the antecedent noun (e.g., the applicant) should be repeated or gender-neutral pronouns like the plural they should be employed. Thirdly, using plural forms or noun repetition should be a good practice. The plurality of the words, which include the pronouns like employees instead of the gendered pronouns like he or she, completely destroys the usage of the gendered pronouns. In cases where one cannot avoid using the pronouns, restating the noun articulation- e.g. the officer, the officer- is better to create clarity without being biased. Fourthly, avoiding unnecessary gender references: The irrelevant gendered assumptions that do not concern the substantive provision must be eliminated. An example is the wording of the sentence that requires a person to file his/her appeal in 30 days, as opposed to he must file his/her appeal... since it does not make the assumption that the person is gender specific.

Such methods are familiar to the authoritative guides on drafting, such as those published by the international labour organization and the parliamentary law offices of governments such as New Zealand

and Canada. Canadian principles in the drafting of legislation explicitly support the use of gender-neutral language and offers enumerated lexicographic alternatives to established gendered language e.g. firefighter instead of fireman (Revell & Vapnek, 2020). The Parliamentary Counsel Office of New Zealand also gives advice to drafters confirming the usage of gender-neutral terms, including chair, and opposes the use of he or she, but rather the guidance recommends the use of terms like the member or rephrasing of clauses to avoid the use of gender-based language (Revell & Vapnek, 2020). These jurisdictions show how re-constructions of the words of the law can be achieved without making any change in the legal meaning although such re-constructions have far reached consequences in terms of equity.

Findings of the study

The following are the summarized findings:

- A. Statutory language is biased to male individuals, using masculine pronouns, gendered titles as well as Patriarchal premises.
- B. The language in issue has an influence over judicial interpretation, administrative implementation and institutional culture, thus circularizing structural inequities.
- C. Women are symbolically and materially subject in the law, and this limitation restricts their access to justice and the utilization of their rights.
- D. The language of legislation in Bangladesh does not meet the requirements of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and is still in the same position with the rest of the world where the language used in legislation is gender neutral.

Recommendations

A. Legislative Reform: Any existing laws should receive a systematic analysis and, as a result, be revised to eliminate gender

language, such as masculine pronouns and titles that are male-cantered. This is because such revisions are aimed at ensuring that the legal texts are not overly patriarchal and that they indicate gender equality.

B. Gender-Neutral Drafting Guidelines: Drafting manuals should also be introduced by the government immediately and give a clear indication on the use of inclusive and neutral language. Such guidelines would allow the people who draft statutes to write rules that would not implicitly favor the male point of view.

C. Institutional Capacity Building: Training should be provided to the judges, lawyers, legislative drafters, and public officials on the ways in which gendered legal language is used to influence interpretation, administrative practice, and legal recognition of women, which reduces the unconscious institutional bias.

D. CEDAW Compliance Review: Bangladesh should also periodically review its legislations to find cases of linguistic discrimination and hence meets its reporting duties in the Convention towards the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This type of systematic review will make sure that the statutory language is coordinated with international obligations to get rid of the discrimination of women.

Conclusions

This paper concludes that gendered language is deeply rooted in the laws of Bangladesh through the continued use of masculine pronouns, male-dominated occupational titles, and other assumptions based on patriarchy in the drafting of statutes. These forms of linguistic practices are not just symbolic; they actively bring about structural inequality by creating men as default legal subjects and women as secondary or exceptional legal subjects. Consequently, the gendered statutory language impacts judicial reasoning, administrative practice, institutional culture and pragmatic access of women to justice.

The study also demonstrates that such a legislative trend is not in line with the constitutional guarantees of equality found in Articles 27 and 28 of the Constitution of Bangladesh, as well as the international commitments of Bangladesh under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) particularly Article 2. In comparison to jurisdictions like Canada and New Zealand, it is shown that gender-neutral legislative drafting is a feasible and effective way of ensuring substantive equality. This study, therefore, suggests systematic review and amendment of the current laws to eliminate the gendered language, adoption of official guidelines of gender-neutral drafting, sensitization of the judiciary and administrative systems regarding the language bias and regular review of the compliance of the law in line with the CEDAW requirements. Legal language reform is thus critical to not only an inclusive lawmaking process, but also to enhance the equal legal status of women in Bangladesh.

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Challenges of Learning Arabic among Adult Learners in Bangladesh: A Quantitative Descriptive Study

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Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History</i> Date of Submission 29-01-2026 Date of Acceptance 06-05-2026 Date of Publication 15-06-2026	Bangladesh has a close historical relationship with the Arabic language, mainly due to its religious significance. However, in the contemporary global context, the importance of Arabic is no longer limited to religious matters; it has become increasingly significant in the fields of international relations and economic activities. In Bangladesh, there are primarily two education systems: 1. The general education system, where Arabic is absent in the curriculum. 2. The Madrasah education system, where Arabic is mandatory. That's why students in general education systems often lack Arabic language skills. However, for students in the general education system, learning Arabic is limited to the various courses offered by university institutes, despite the growing demand. Since 2016, there has been a significant increase in the demand to learn Arabic among general educated adult learners, because some private institutes started the Arabic Language Courses for adults and successfully commercialized them. These adult learners, whether pursuing graduation or employed individuals, face numerous challenges in learning Arabic, including both non-linguistic and linguistic challenges. The study was conducted with 200 learners. Based on the goal
<i>Keywords</i> Arabic, Bangladesh, Adult learners, Approaches, Challenges, Solutions	

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of improving the educational experience of adult learners of Arabic in Bangladesh, this study adopts a descriptive and quantitative approach to pinpoint the challenges that they face and resolve them.

Introduction

Arabic is one of the most prominent languages of the modern era. Arabic also holds significant importance in Bangladesh. People in Bangladesh learn Arabic for religious purposes, to develop language skills, and for employment opportunities in the Middle East. People from general background learn Arabic either from a religious perspective or from the perspective of language skill development. Generally, they learn Arabic from different online and offline courses offered by different university language institutes or private language institutes. Besides government institutes, there are dedicated private institutes for teaching Arabic; however, they are insufficient to meet the demand. A large number of people in our population come from a general education background, and they did not have the opportunity to learn Arabic in school. Consequently, an increasing number of grown-ups are trying to learn Arabic after completing their schooling. Adult language learners face more challenges when beginning the study of a linguistically distant language like Arabic at a later stage in life (Ellis, R., 2008). In most cases, these challenges are acknowledged neither by the learners nor the instructors. As a result, when the learners step forward to learn, most of them don't meet their expectations, and in most cases, they cannot adapt to the steps of growing skills in Arabic. Despite growing demand for Arabic among adult learners in Bangladesh, limited empirical research has been conducted to identify their linguistic and non-linguistic challenges and solve them. That is why it is important to sort out the issues and find the solutions. This study will emphasize both the discussion of the challenges and the proposed solutions related to them.

Literature Review

Some Bangladeshi researchers have generally discussed the common scenario of Arabic language teaching in Bangladesh. Haque (2016)

conducted a case study of some selected Bangladeshi institutes and revealed that Arabic teaching is widely plugged with grammar and classical texts without paying attention to the communicative four skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Chowdhury (2017) also found a gap between language teaching methodologies and actual classroom environments in Bangladesh and revealed that the grammar-translation method is widely used in teaching and content, which limits learners' ability to achieve communicative competence in Arabic, ultimately hindering their proficiency and practical use of the language in real-life situations.

Hasan (2020) conducted a critical analysis of Arabic language teaching in Bangladesh, emphasizing that teachers frequently lack formal training in second-language learning and that reliance on traditional madrasah-oriented resources fails to meet the needs of modern adult learners seeking functional proficiency. Rahman and Khatun (2019) similarly found that teachers and students in Bangladeshi Arabic programs expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the existing learning materials, highlighting a lack of resources that cohesively integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing within a unified pedagogical framework. Rashid and Aziz (2018) also got similar findings, indicating that both teachers' and students' perceptions revealed a structural dissonance between educational objectives and course design. Rahman and Khatun (2019) found that both teachers and learners in Arabic courses in Bangladesh reported significant dissatisfaction with the existing learning materials and a shortage of resources that include all four skills. Sayeed (2019) also concluded that the growing demand for Arabic is not yet matched due to an insufficient institutional response and a crowded curriculum in structurally unsupportive environments.

In terms of challenges, methods, learning purposes, and motivation, there are differences between language learning in childhood and in adulthood (Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, 2015). The teaching method and the instructor are important for teaching adult learners a

language. If these two aspects are not adequately coordinated, learners may experience disappointment, hindering their ability to learn the language according to their needs and expectations, and in some cases, they may discontinue their language learning.

Despite all this research, the research field does not adequately address the challenges of learning Arabic among adults in the Bangladeshi context, in classroom environments, outside classroom environments, and teaching techniques. Most researchers focused on the internal challenges faced by common learners of all ages, but they did not specify the challenges encountered by adults, particularly their external challenges, which significantly hindered their ability to complete Arabic language learning effectively. Therefore, based on the factors mentioned above, a clear research gap has been identified that specifically addresses the challenges faced by adult learners. The research has been conducted using a quantitative and descriptive approach, incorporating responses from adult learners who completed questionnaires.

Research Questions

Considering the objectives of this study, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What external challenges do adult learners face in learning the Arabic language that impact their learning process?
2. What are the internal challenges faced by adult learners in learning Arabic that are often overlooked due to a lack of awareness and inefficiency of authorities and instructors?
3. How do the structure of language classrooms, pedagogical approaches, and language learning environments influence the development of effective Arabic learning and the motivation of learners?
4. What are the recommendations for addressing these various challenges faced by adult learners in terms of curriculum and

teaching methods, and what factors can help improve their language learning outcomes?

Theoretical Framework

This research was conducted through several integrated theoretical frameworks, such as Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles, and Adult Learning Theory (Andragogy). These theories address how adult learners acquire a foreign language and how to develop language learning skills. Considering the general educated society and the context of Bangladesh, what are the challenges they face?

Methodology

Research Design

This research employed descriptive and quantitative methodologies to discuss and examine the challenges encountered by adult learners. Adult learners typically face two categories of problems: non-linguistic challenges and linguistic challenges. This study has identified problems and offered various solutions and approaches to solve them.

Data Collection Instruments

To validate the study, the data were collected using the following methods:

1. **Questionnaire:** First of all, some probable challenges facing adult learners in Bangladesh were identified by the learners and instructors of Arabic language courses. After the final exams of their courses, learners' feedback was collected via a Google Form that included multiple-choice, linear scale questions (a five-point Likert was used to examine participants' answers, where 1 =Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5 =Strongly Agree), and some long questions. The questionnaire focuses on the challenges of all four linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing),

language teaching methods, different linguistic difficulties, and diverse external challenges that affect their learning experience. The complete questionnaire is available in **Appendix A**, and the corresponding response data are accessible in **Appendix B**.

- 2. Classroom Observation:** Some challenges were listed by the instructors who experienced the challenges in the environments of the classroom and the interactions between them and learners while conducting their courses.
- 3. Informal Feedback:** While the courses are ongoing, informal comments from learners, along with their personal interactions and consultations with instructors, also contribute to this study by identifying the challenges that enhance the study's data.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) were used to look at the quantitative data from the questionnaires. Thematic analysis was employed to examine qualitative data from observations and feedback, aiming to identify trends and provide in-depth explanations for the challenges faced by learners.

Participants

This study comprised 200 adult learners from a general educational background who had not formally studied the Arabic language in their school. The adult learners were categorized into two groups.

Offline Group: This group comprised 100 learners from 4 offline batches at the Institute of Modern Languages, University of Dhaka.

The online group consisted of 100 learners from 4 batches at Sibawayh Institute, one of the leading online Arabic learning institutions in Bangladesh.

All participants in the study were 18 years of age or older. The adult learners comprised undergraduate students, postgraduate

students, and employed professionals. Variations in age, occupation, and motivations for acquiring the Arabic language were identified among these learners, intensifying the challenges they encountered in learning Arabic.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Participants (N = 200)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Mode of Study	Offline (IML, DU)	100	50
	Online (Sibawayh Institute)	100	50
Type of Students	Students	127	63.5
	Employed	51	25.5
	Self-Employed	22	11
Age Group	18 - 25 years	103	51.5
	26 - 35 years	51	25.5
	36 - 45 years	27	13.5
	Above 45 years	19	9.5
Educational Back-ground	General Education	200	100

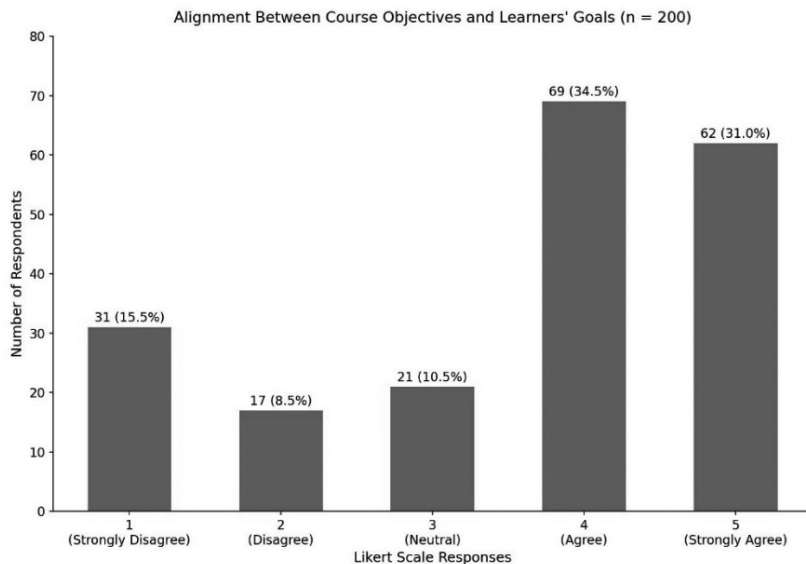
Types of Challenges

The challenges can be divided into two categories:

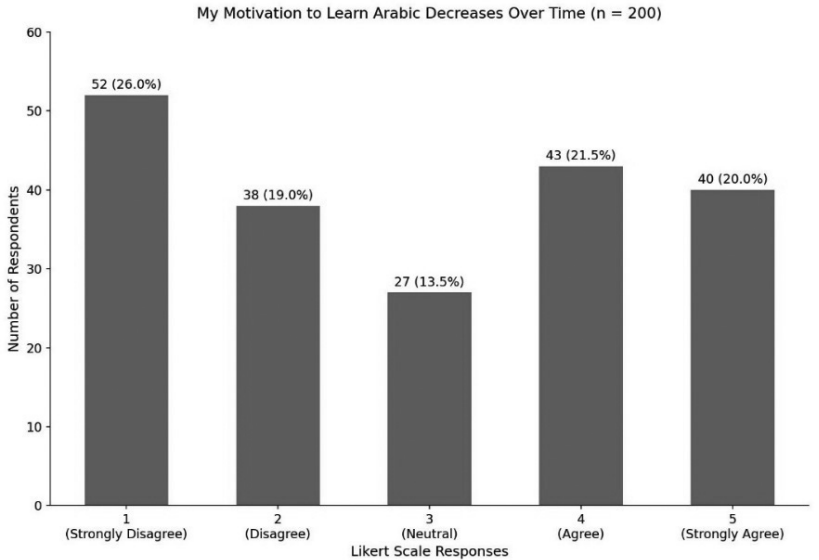
1. Challenges that are not directly related to the Arabic language but affect learning.
2. Challenges that are directly related to the Arabic language.

Non-Linguistic Challenges: Let us explore the challenges that, while not directly associated with adults’ learning of the Arabic language, influence it.

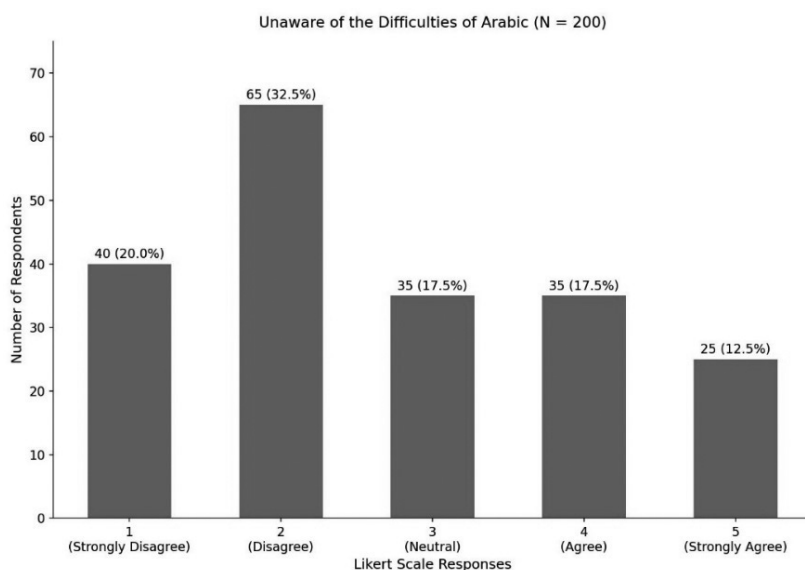
1. Diverse learning objectives of the Arabic language: A learner studies Arabic for various purposes, including skill development, religious studies, or achieving career objectives. When a student comes in with the intention of developing linguistic four skills – listening, speaking, reading, writing- but the course material is structured to teach Arabic as part of religious studies simultaneously, while focusing only on reading skills, the course material does not match the learner’s goals, which causes the learner to become less motivated, encounter difficulties, and achieve subpar results. Teaching Arabic as a religious or classical subject limits students’ communication abilities (Al-Batal, M., 2006). The misalignment between students’ goals and the course books is one of the main obstacles to achieving the expected goals of learning Arabic (Chowdhury, 2017). According to our survey, 131 of 200 (65.5%) adult learners could not find their learning objectives in these courses.



2. Decline of motivation over Time: While learners initially hold significant potential, their motivation frequently declines after a certain period. Several reasons underlie this. Primarily, a major reason for disappointment is unmet expectations. When an adult learner fails to meet expectations or does not see proportional skill growth relative to the number of lessons attended, he perceives that he is not meeting his expected standards. When learners fail to recognize measurable advancement in language proficiency, motivation diminishes quickly (Dörnyei, Z., 2001). Furthermore, as the learner observes tangible progress, he will gain confidence in his abilities, hence increasing his desire to master this noble language. Conversely, the learner will get disinterested in the absence of observable progress and skill development over time. In such a situation, the learner becomes disappointed, and he finally drops out. According to our survey, 83 of 200 adult learners acknowledged that their motivation to learn Arabic decreases over time.

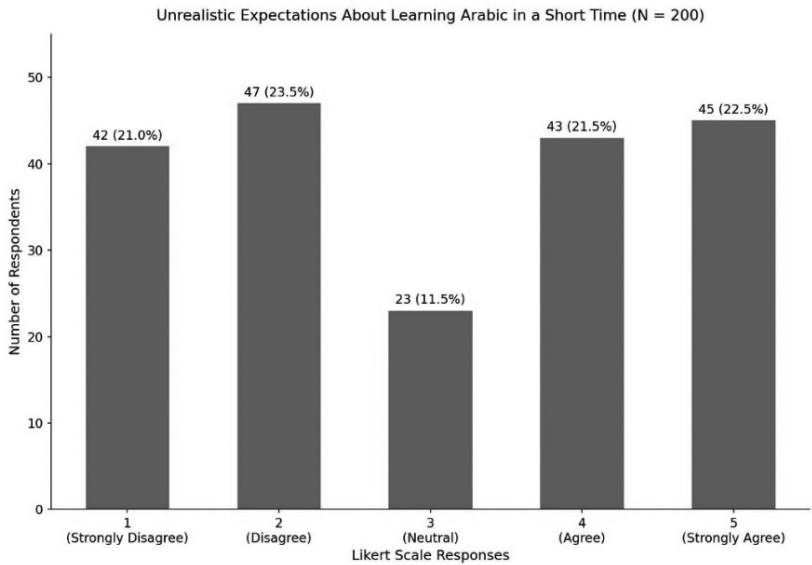


3. Unaware of the difficulties of Arabic: In Bangladesh, people acquire the experience of learning a foreign language initially through English, since learning English is compulsory in the government curriculum. When it comes to learn Arabic as a foreign language, people often compare it to English. They believe that learning Arabic is equally as easy as learning English. In terms of vocabulary, syntax, and the structure of sentences, Arabic is significantly more enriched and complicated than English. At this point, some learners become demotivated when they come up with the belief that learning Arabic is as easy as learning English, which further discourages them to learn Arabic. According to our survey, 105 out of 200 adult learners (52%) acknowledged that they were unaware of the difficulties of Arabic.

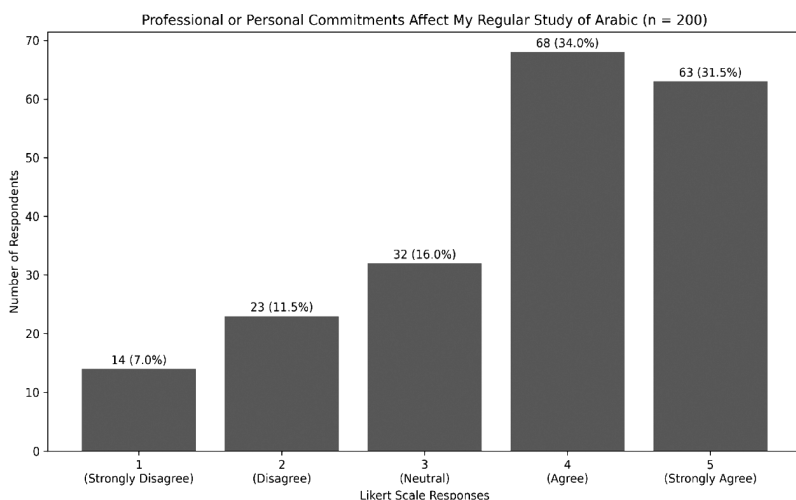


4. Unrealistic expectations in a short time limit: Adult Learners, once finishing the elementary level of the language, frequently expect to comprehend Arabic media and the lectures of Arab scholars, or to understand holy texts such as the Quran and Hadith within a short timeframe. Unfortunately, they don't know that they are required to achieve at least an intermediate or advanced level of proficiency in

the language to meet those expectations. Having merely fundamental knowledge will be insufficient to fulfill such expectations. Consequently, in many cases, once they finish the primary level, they are unable to fulfill their expectations, resulting in frustration and discontinuance. According to our survey, 87 of 200 learners had unrealistic expectations about learning Arabic in a short time.

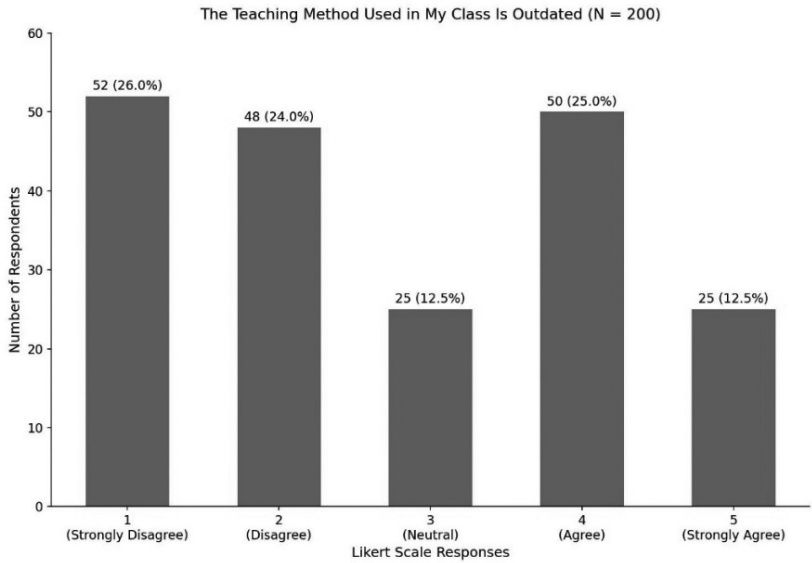


5. Lack of priority: To acquire proficiency in Arabic, learners must dedicate a minimum amount of time to the study of the Arabic language. Achieving proficiency in the Arabic language is extremely challenging without daily study and consistent practice. Due to an imbalance between professional and personal commitments, adult learners often fail to prioritize Arabic learning. Inconsistency will lead to unsatisfactory progress. Our survey data indicates that 131 out of 200 (65.5%) respondents experienced less consistency in learning Arabic due to their professional and personal obligations.

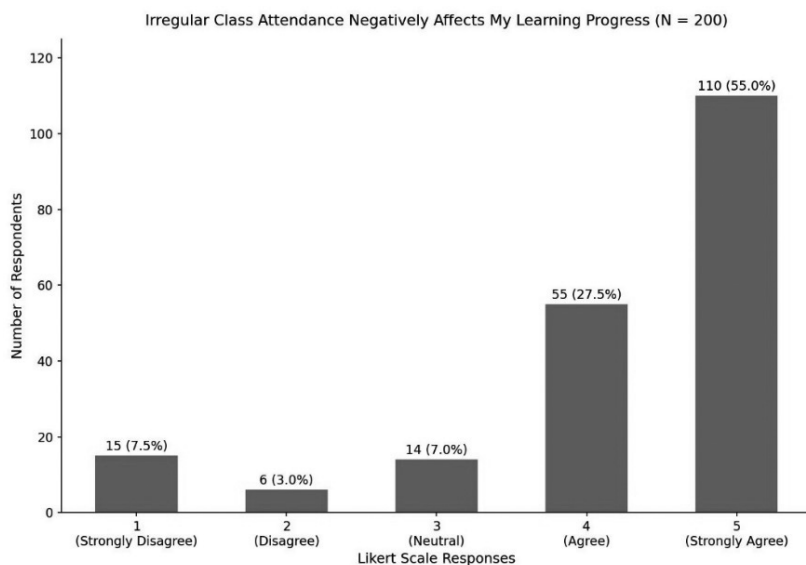


6. Use of outdated teaching methods and madrasah-oriented materials: Adult learners who want to learn Arabic sometimes commence with a grammar-focused book before engaging with skill-development-oriented resources. They prioritize grammar books excessively, neglecting the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills by studying disorganized and unnecessary grammatical rules initially. This makes Arabic challenging and discouraging for primary-level learners. In Bangladesh, most of the institutions still follow the traditional grammar-translation method as a medium of teaching Arabic. This is not a modern approach at all. Using modern methods reduces the time and effort. One of the significant tools for learning a language is the use of resources and materials. Besides the main language book, an institute should provide the students with some ideal and effective content for practice purposes outside of the classes. Unfortunately, here in Bangladesh, there is a shortage of comprehensive Arabic learning materials that integrate all four language skills, making effective learning difficult. Because

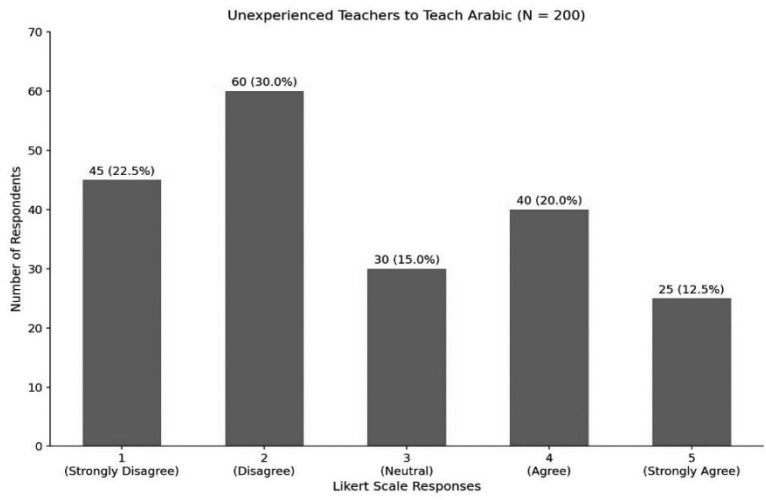
of this, in Bangladesh, neither teaching nor learning Arabic is that effective. Haque (2016) also found in a case study of some selected Bangladeshi institutes and revealed that Arabic teaching is widely plugged with grammar and classical texts without paying attention to the communicative four skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. According to our survey, 100 out of 200 (50%) adult learners acknowledged that the teaching method and learning materials used in their classes are outdated.



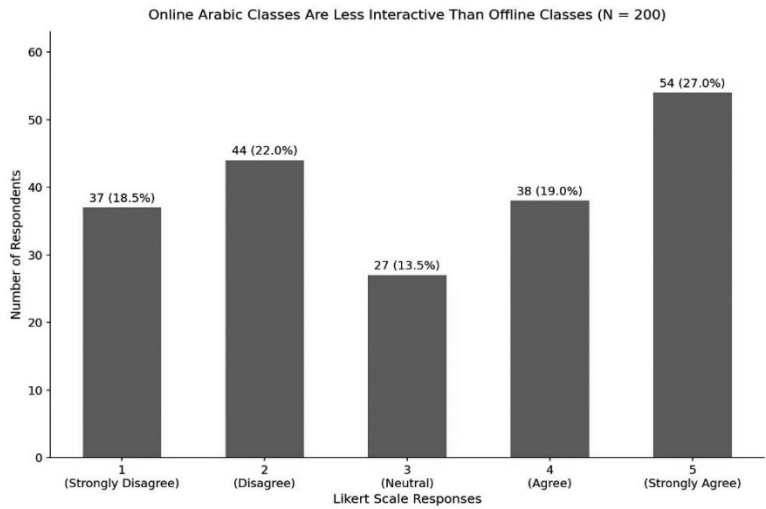
7. Irregularity in attendance: Attending each of the classes for learning Arabic is mandatory. This is because Arabic lessons are highly interconnected. This means that the content of the next class is linked to what was covered in previous classes. So, if learners miss the third class, they will likely misunderstand the fourth class. Missing classes disrupts understanding and slows progress. Our survey data indicates that 165 out of 200 (83.5%) adult learners acknowledged that Irregular class attendance negatively affects their learning progress.



8. Unexperienced teachers to teach Arabic: When adult learners begin their Arabic learning with an inexperienced teacher, they encounter challenges. The majority of Arabic language teachers in Bangladesh lack the necessary training in second language teaching methods and techniques. The majority of them teach their students using the outdated grammar-translation method, when numerous methods for learning a second language and modern Arabic language materials have already been developed. Hamid and Rahman (2021) pointed out that Arabic instructors are burdened with delivering a detailed curriculum while receiving inadequate training and professional assistance. Some teachers make an effort to provide content for their students. However, they frequently fail to keep the qualities, chronological approach, and characteristics that a modern language book should have because of a lack of expertise in developing content for Arabic language learners. Our questionnaire reveals that 125 out of 200 adult learners (62.5%) think their course teachers lack the necessary training to teach Arabic.

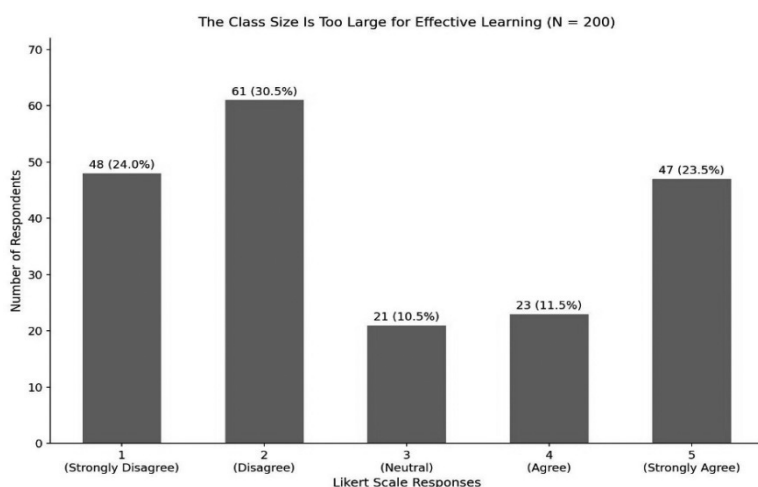


9. Challenges in both online and offline classes: In Bangladesh, although the offline teaching method for Arabic was well-known and familiar, the COVID-19 pandemic has led both teachers and learners to significantly shift to online teaching methods. In physical classes, challenges include that people in busy cities cannot attend on time every day due to heavy traffic, or they must allocate extra time to ensure they arrive punctually despite the traffic.

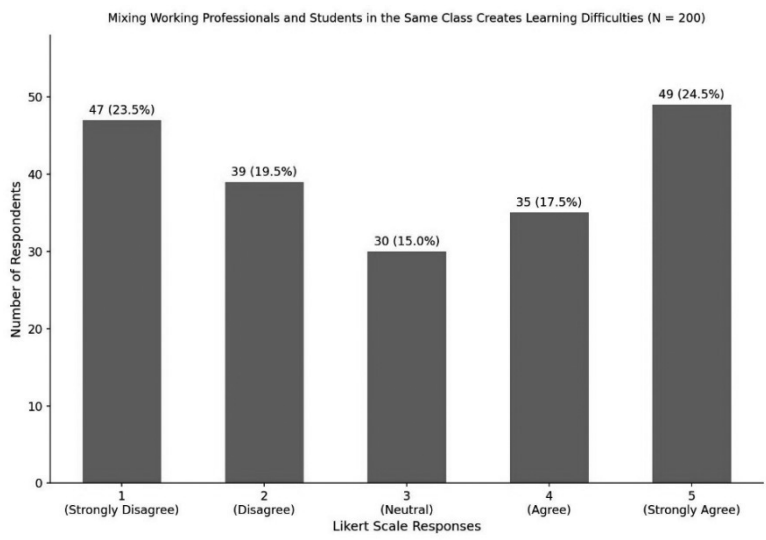


These factors lead to the waste of a lot of time, which is hard for students and service holders. They lost interest as a result. Regarding these issues, online classes are better. But there are some cons, too. In online classes, adult learners encounter significant challenges in online environments due to limited engagement and less instant feedback (Hassani, M., & Al-Momani, F., 2020). In some cases, the teachers do not understand the use of electronic devices. Therefore, if the teacher is not skilled enough regarding interaction in class and understanding the use of devices, we cannot expect a satisfactory output in online classes. Our survey data indicates that 92 out of 200 (46%) adult learners acknowledged that their online Arabic classes are less interactive than physical classes.

10. Overcrowded classrooms: The standard size of classes of the Arabic language is 20-24 students. But in Bangladesh, most of the institutes do not follow this standard; rather, they reserve one teacher for 50–80 students. The teacher can't provide equal time to each student, and the students can't show their performance to the teacher. Because of the many students, teachers cannot examine homework attentively and cannot provide them with proper feedback. Large language classes reduce opportunities for interaction, feedback, and individual learner development (Richards, J. C., 2015). Our survey data indicates that 70 out of 200 (35%) adult learners acknowledged that their class size is too large for effective learning.



11. Combining working professionals and students in the same batch: Teaching both working professionals and students in the same batch causes certain challenges. For instance, employed individuals usually stay away from engaging in academic classes or lengthy learning for a long time. They face challenges with the adjustment to conventional classes.



Furthermore, due to their busy schedules and professional commitments, they can hardly complete and submit assignments or homework. Whereas a student stays ahead of the working professionals, as they can give more time and effort comparatively. Consequently, it becomes a challenge to integrate working professionals and students within the same batch. Typically, from this type of batch, most of the time, learners do not come up with satisfactory skills. Our survey data reveals that 84 out of 200 adult learners (41%) faced difficulties because of combining working professionals and students in the same batch.

12. Age Differences: Wide age gaps among learners create challenges in content delivery and classroom interaction. Let’s say a ninth-grade student and an undergraduate are not the same in terms of maturity. In

this case, the level of understanding, questioning the instructor, and the skill of presentation vary a lot from person to person. This can lead to unwarranted pressure on the instructor. It becomes complex for the instructor to create a fine balance in the classroom. According to our survey, there are four age groups in the same batch.

Age Groups (N-200)	Number	Percentage
18 - 25 years	103	51.5
26 - 35 years	51	25.5
36 - 45 years	27	13.5
Above 45 years	19	9.5

Table 2: Major Non-Linguistic Challenges Faced by Adult Learners at a glance

SL	Non-Linguistic Challenges	Number of Students Who were agreed	Agree (%)
1	Dissimilarity between learners' goals and course objectives	131	65.5
2	Decreasing motivation with time	83	41.5
3	Unaware of the difficulties of Arabic	105	52
4	Unrealistic Expectations in a Short Time Limit	88	44
5	Time limitations resulting from professional or academic obligations	131	63.5
6	Irregular class attendance	165	82.5
7	Use of outdated teaching methods & absence of four skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing)	100	50
8	Overcrowded classrooms	70	35
9	Mixed batches (students & professionals)	84	41
10	Challenges in online classes	92	46
11	Unexperienced teachers to teach Arabic on online	125	62.5

Linguistic Challenges

Let's point out the adult's linguistic challenges.

1. Pronunciation Challenges: The adult learners face different obstacles when they start learning the Arabic language. The challenges faced by them are as follows:

- The Arabic letters that are pronounced from the same area of the mouth pose a challenge for learners when trying to articulate them. Such as:

ظَلَمَ & ذَلَمَ → ظ & ذ
جَبَرَ & زَبَرَ → ج & ز
طَبَرَ & تَبَرَ → ط & ت

- Arabic sounds that do not exist in the learner's native language cause persistent pronunciation difficulties (**Khalil, A., 2010**). There are a few letters in Arabic that need to be pronounced from the throat, the vocal cord, and the depths of the gob. These letters are absent in the Bengali language, which leads to wrong pronunciation by the learners. Such as:

1. ح (Hā') → It is frequently pronounced as “হ” or pronounced weakly, resulting in the actual Arabic that is not heard clearly.
2. ع (‘Ayn) → Often, it is omitted in pronunciation or turns into a “আ” sound.
3. غ (Ghayn) → It is frequently pronounced as “গ” or “ঘ”.

- The Bengali speakers use 40-45 sounds, combining the Bengali vowels and consonants. In contrast, only 28 basic consonants are used in Arabic, and some of these are even absent in Bengali. Such as:

1. Consonants from the deeper throat: ح & ع
2. Consonants from the vocal cord: خ & غ
3. Consonants from the tongue: ض

2. Writing Challenges: Mostly, the adult learners struggle with the handwriting part. The following list includes some of the handwriting issues adults face.

- A. They have difficulties with positioning dots (nuqta) above and below specific letters. They also make mistakes in differentiating between letters with one dot and those with two dots. Often, the dot that should be placed above a letter is incorrectly placed below it, and the dot that should be below a letter is placed above it instead. For example, they write "ب" with one dot above the letter. Due to this error, the letter looks like "ن".
- B. They have Issues with connecting the letters to write a word. In Arabic, some of the letters never connect with the previous or next letter. Those are, ا, د, ذ, ر, ز, و. Some of the learners are unaware of this and make mistakes while writing. Such as: They write the spelling of مَنْصُورٌ (Maṣṣūr) incorrectly, they write مَنْصُورٌ. They write the spelling of وَلِيٌّ (Walī) incorrectly. They write وَلِيٌّ.
- C. Not knowing the difference between rounded ة and wide-shaped ت also leads to spelling mistakes. For example, writing بَيْتٌ instead of بَيْتٌ is incorrect, and writing بَيْتٌ instead of بَيْتٌ is also incorrect.
- D. Students often make mistakes in using long vowels (و, ا, ي), which can lead to spelling errors such as جَمِعةٌ instead of جَمِعةٌ and جَمِلٌ instead of جَمِيلٌ.
- E. Some learners pronounce Arabic words following Bengali pronunciation, and they make mistakes when writing those Arabic words. They often make mistakes with the following letters:
 - ه and ح → The word هِرٌّ is pronounced in Bengali as “হিরকন” and written incorrectly as حِرٌّ.
 - ت and ط → The word طَاعُوْتُ is pronounced in Bengali as “তাগুতুন” and written incorrectly as تاغُوْتُ.

- **س and ص** → The word **سَيِّفٌ** is pronounced in Bengali as “সাইফুন” and written incorrectly as **صَيِّفٌ**.

3. Grammatical Challenges

- A. Arabic grammar is very complex. The plural forms and gender usage of nouns are particularly challenging. Along with grammatical complexities, there is a lack of sufficient practice of grammatical rules. The instructors mostly focus on theoretical Arabic rather than practical, which leads to unfamiliarity with practical and communicative Arabic among learners. For example, one of the common rules to make the plural form of a male noun is to add "ون" after the noun. Such as: **موظفون، فلاحون، مسلمون**. But this rule does not apply to all male nouns. Some nouns do not follow this rule. Such as: **أطباء، شعراء، كُتّاب، إِخوة**
- B. In the Bengali and English languages, the ending part of a word in a sentence usually does not change. However, in Arabic sentences, the ending of a word changes based on the subject, object, and verb. This type of change is called **الإعراب** (i‘rāb—case endings or declension). At the end of a word, there may sometimes be **تنوين الفتح** (two fathah / fathatayn), **تنوين الكسر** (two kasrah / kasratayn), or **تنوين الضم** (two dammah / dammatayn), and sometimes **الفتحة** (one fathah), **الكسرة** (one kasrah), or **الضمة** (one dammah). Along with these, various letters and signs are used to indicate the grammatical position of a word within a sentence. Such a system does not exist in the Bengali language. Moreover, most Arabic books are read without **الإعراب** (i‘rāb). For this reason, Bengali-speaking adult learners face challenges when learning the Arabic language.
- C. Bangla and English languages are familiar to learners from an early age. The sentence structure for both Bangla and English follows the pattern of subject + verb + object. But Arabic language sentence structure varies context-wise. Sometimes the verb is before the subject and vice versa. For Bangla and English learners, it is difficult to learn and master this structure. For example, the

verb before subject: "أكل خالد التفاح." and the verb after the subject: "خالد أكل التفاح." Both sentences are correct. Sometimes the plural form of subjects makes more complexities in verb conversion.

- D.** The conversion of verbs has limitations in Bangla and English. While verb conversion has limitations in both Bangla and English, Arabic requires studying an entirely different large chapter to understand this concept. This segment appears to be difficult for the learners as well. For example, the verb "فعل" has more than 1500 conversions depending on the number, gender, and person.

4. Challenges Related to Arabic Writing Skill: To express one's thoughts clearly through writing in Arabic, one must first have a practical command of commonly used vocabulary, sentence structure, and spelling, as well as develop writing proficiency on a variety of topics while learning the language. However, in our country, grammatical rules are overemphasized, while writing skills are not given separate emphasis through practical and communicative methods of teaching Arabic. As a result, while many students improve in learning other Arabic language skills, they struggle to write spontaneous compositions, reports, essays, and other Arabic-language applications. This occurs because sufficient writing practice is not conducted along with language learning.

5. Challenges Related to Arabic Reading Skill: Arabic learners need to read a large number of Arabic texts and storybooks according to their level to develop reading skills so that problems related to reading ability do not persist. However, in our country, although language textbooks place heavy emphasis on grammatical rules, they do not include separate texts or passages for reading skill development, nor do they provide comprehension sections. As a result, there is insufficient opportunity to enhance reading skills through various practice activities based on such materials. Moreover, language teachers do not give separate importance to the development of reading skills. Consequently, even after completing different levels of Arabic language study, students fail to achieve the reading proficiency appropriate to those levels.

6. Challenges Related to Arabic Listening and Speaking Skills:

Listening and speaking are frequently the most overlooked skills in Arabic language classrooms, especially in non-Arab contexts (Alosh, M., 2017). For the development of listening and speaking skills, the use of audio materials separately is absent in most language classrooms. Moreover, many educators fail to select level-appropriate and effective books for developing speaking skills. In addition, since many conversation-based books are not accompanied by audio materials, students do not benefit properly from studying those books. Inadequate exposure to audio input in Arabic lessons significantly restricts learners' listening comprehension skills (Alosh, M., 2017). As a result, students face difficulties in appropriately acquiring listening and speaking skills.

7. Vocabulary and Word Meaning challenges: Arabic is a rich and ancient language. The Arabic language has many words, roots, and meanings. Learning Arabic vocabulary is difficult. Learners face many problems in learning Arabic vocabulary. For example:

- A. Arabic has synonyms (مترادف), antonyms (مضاد), and words with multiple meanings (المشترك اللفظي). Learners cannot understand or use these words properly. As a result, vocabulary learning becomes difficult.
- B. The lack of morphological awareness significantly limits learners' capacity to enrich their Arabic vocabulary (Saiegh-Haddad, E., & Henkin-Roitfarb, R., 2014). Many learners do not understand the technique of conversion to the root words from the modified words by eliminating the extra letters or vowels. This phenomenon happens due to the lack of knowledge of Arabic Morphology (علم الصرف). As a result, most of them are not capable enough of searching for the root words of the modified words.
- C. The phonological, morphological, and syntactic differences between Bengali and Arabic are considerable. In their comparative linguistic study, **Akan, Abdul-Rab, and Salafi (2023)** observed notable contrasts in consonant systems, sentence patterns, and grammatical categories.

Table 3: Linguistic Difficulties Reported by the Adult Learners at a glance

SL	Linguistic Area	Major Difficulty Identified by the Adults	Percentage (%)
1	Pronunciation	Pronouncing certain Arabic letters	46
		Arabic sounds that do not exist in Bengali	46
		Transitioning from Qur'anic recitation to spoken	65
2	Listening & Speaking	Insufficient listening practice in my Arabic classes	56
		Limited opportunities to speak Arabic in class	52.5
		Lack of audio/video materials on speaking and listening skills.	61
3	Reading	Insufficient graded reading materials for my level	31
		Struggling to read Arabic texts without vowel marks (ḥarakāt).	59
4	Writing	Writing Arabic letters correctly	37.5
		Making mistakes with dots (nuqṭa) and letter connections	44.5
		Arabic spelling rules (hamzah, long vowels, etc.)	41
5	Grammar	Arabic grammar is more difficult than other languages I know.	52
		Understanding i'rāb (The harakat & tanveen of last words of sentences)	49.5
		Teaching grammar theoretically without sufficient practice	41.5
6	Vocabulary	Learning Arabic vocabulary due to multiple meanings and root forms.	65.5

Recommendations

The discussions mentioned above prove that adult learners face various challenges hindering their learning process. The Arabic language institutes and instructors should focus on these challenges and how

to solve them. To resolve and mitigate the challenges, some effective recommendations are the following:

1. Choosing a suitable teaching method for Bangladeshi adult learners is essential. Their age, language learning objectives, chronological accuracy, duration of learning, and motivation levels must be evaluated holistically to formulate a thorough and effective method. Textbooks should be designed specifically for them according to this strategy. It is not possible to expect effective outcomes if textbooks written using different teaching methods are studied in an uncoordinated manner. Adult learners are self-directed, goal-oriented, and driven by practical outcomes. It is doubtful that teaching strategies that disregard the experiences, objectives, and motivations of students will be successful (Knowles, M. S., Holton, E. F., & Swanson, R. A., 2015). Arabic Language courses in Bangladesh should apply a skill-oriented, learner-centered syllabus and should focus on the communicative needs of adult learners. Chowdhury (2017) and Habib (2018).
2. Language learning institutions should clearly explain the purpose of the course before starting it. Different courses should be designed for varying purposes. To learn Arabic for religious purposes, a learner should not have to learn professional communicative Arabic, or vice versa. Along with the objectives of the course, as much time as necessary should be given to implement these objectives.
3. Language institutes should take several steps to help adults retain their motivation during language courses. Whether they are satisfied with their learning outcomes after each class has to be considered. At the end of each language class, the learners should be asked to consider their learning problems. The learner will be able to maintain his motivation for language acquisition if these tasks are completed successfully.
4. Adult learners in Bangladesh stumble at the beginning because they are not properly aware of the difficulties of Arabic. Therefore, at the beginning of the class, language instructors should clearly

discuss how much time and how many classes will be needed to acquire their expected language skills, and institutes should provide a written outline of the learning topics of every class and its outcomes. We need to make learners aware of the important issues and challenges involved in acquiring language skills. Shohel and Islam (2016) similarly underscored that institutional orientation programs, which clearly communicate the actual timeline, skill progression, and realistic expectations of Arabic learning, are a crucial yet consistently overlooked component of Arabic language education in Bangladesh.

5. The excessive emphasis on grammar in Arabic language teaching should be reduced; the elementary levels of language learning should prioritize language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) over grammar, and the basic, widely used grammatical rules can be taught in elementary levels with examples and sufficient practice. Communicative proficiency in a language cannot be attained just by learning grammar, which lacks practical application in real-life contexts. (Al-Batal, M., 2017).
6. The number of participants in the language batch should be restricted to 20-25. It is essential to separate the batches of running students and working professionals. Their age must be taken into consideration when distributing students among language batches.
7. Attending every language class should be mandatory for every student. Some learners are often absent from class because they have academic examinations for honors and master's programs, while others have professional commitments related to their jobs. Providing them with recorded classes can be a beneficial alternative for these students so that they can complete the classes that they missed and prepare themselves for upcoming classes. Recorded classes can help a large number of learners avoid dropping out.
8. Adult learners often make errors in pronouncing Arabic letters and words. In this context, while teaching pronunciation, it is effective to introduce first those Arabic letters that have similarities with the Bengali alphabet. Subsequently, comparatively difficult letters should

be taught carefully, allowing sufficient time for focused practice.

9. Due to an overfocus on grammatical rules and reading skills, listening and speaking skills are often not given proper importance; in some cases, these two skills are ignored. Unfortunately, most of the Arabic classrooms are not well equipped with audio and video resources aligning with the speaking and listening skill books. Instructors should encourage learners' speaking activities and create an Arabic environment in the classroom. Rahman and Khatun (2019) and Rashid and Aziz (2018) assert that the enhancement of listening and speaking skills necessitates distinct, well-organized elements within the curriculum, bolstered by suitable audio-visual resources, instead of being regarded as ancillary outcomes of grammar teaching.
10. Reading skill books that are written and organized from simple to complicated should be included and prioritized as course syllabus books. Texts need to be carefully arranged based on grammatical difficulty, sentence length, and vocabulary load. They should start with brief but impactful lines and work their way up to conversation, paragraphs, and short stories. Reading simple, engaging materials extensively enhances learners' confidence and improves their reading fluency. Beginner students should not be exposed to extremely challenging or literary texts (Day, R. R., & Bamford, J., 1998).
11. Arabic grammar must be taught in a straightforward and approachable way in Bangladesh. Instead of requiring students to study multiple grammar books from different disciplines, a unified, series-based grammar textbook should be developed. In addition to theoretical explanations, the book should contain numerous examples and practice exercises so that students can successfully use grammar principles. The lessons in the grammar books must be sequential and level-based.
12. Writing skills can be developed in many ways. Integrating writing skills with reading skills is important. Whatever a learner reads in a comprehension, the writing practices should be attached to this. Due to a lack of writing practices, most of the Arabic

learners in Bangladesh cannot write essays, paragraphs, daily issues, and Arabic answers in exams on their own. To solve this issue, the institutes should engage learners with writing-based activities and assignments in classrooms and outside classrooms, and the instructors should give constructive feedback and criticism to learners individually and collectively after assessing their assignments and homework. It is also important that the learners should utilize new vocabulary, sentence structures, and grammatical rules in their practice of writing.

13. Daily evaluations in language classes that include checking homework, providing feedback, and asking questions about the last class lesson can augment learners' development in all four skills. The more accurate the evaluations, the better the learners' results in language learning experiences.
14. Many institutes in Bangladesh take language course tests after completing all the classes of the course. It causes an inaccurate evaluation of learners' language skills. Exams should be conducted after a series of lessons or upon completing a skill level, ideally after at least 12 to 14 classes. The language questions for the exam should be formulated in a manner that reflects the skills learners have acquired. After examination, the instructor should assess the answer scripts and provide them to learners together with individual and collective feedback. The instructor should review common mistakes and their shortcomings after the test and offer suggestions on how to improve each of the four skills.

Conclusion

This study finds that adult learners of Bangladesh with a general education system encounter various challenges in learning the Arabic language. There are two types of challenges: Non-linguistic difficulties and linguistic difficulties. To tackle the non-linguistic issues, many suggestions have been proposed with different methodical and systematic strategies for the institutes, instructors, and learners. Discussions of prior literature with quantitative data from this study indicate that these

external issues restrain the adults from finding proper and effective language learning. Sometimes these issues cause demotivation and disappointment among learners. Grammar-centric learning, a lack of implementation of modern methods, and inexperienced instructors are the main roots of the external problems. The class size, combining working professionals with full-time students, and irregularity in attendance affect their learning experience as well as lead to low-quality learning. Consequently, the learners find this language challenging and cannot continue the course due to a lack of motivation. Bangla-speaking learners face more difficulties than others due to the difference between Bengali and Arabic in terms of pronouncing some Arabic letters that are not familiar to them. Moreover, insufficient learning resources for the four skills accelerate the difficulties for Bengali-speaking learners.

Trying to use the foreign resources of Middle Eastern countries without considering the environment, culture, motivations, and purposes of the learners magnifies the difficulties. Additionally, teaching Arabic grammar requires proper chronological strategies of words and sentence structures and grammatical rules progressing from easy to hard levels and from familiar to advanced uses. As a result, the adult learners start believing that mastering Arabic is impossible for them. Consequently, a large number of learners drop out of Arabic language learning. The findings of this research paper suggest that a massive reformation of language teaching methodologies is required to teach adult learners. To mitigate these challenges faced by adult learners, an organized plan should be implemented. This plan must have a learner-based curriculum, communicative and skill-oriented methods, and separate learning materials for different ages and professional levels. This plan must be executed gradually by experts in Arabic language teaching over three to four years of consistent practical fieldwork, integrating teaching techniques that address cognitive, motivational, and practical needs, while also considering learners' feedback to enhance the effectiveness of language institutes in teaching and learning Arabic and to reduce the challenges faced by adult learners in Bangladesh.

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Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study to collect data from adult Arabic language learners of two institutes in Bangladesh is accessible via the following link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BVYtMZTPTZ1Wv0HIZvts8xeicQ9O4IbF/view?usp=sharing>

Appendix B: Survey Response Data

The anonymized response data collected from 200 participants through the questionnaire are available at the following link:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/15dHe4vPBMW4WRXCAYCoMXhFH6qPZhHaPPXLsv9fOtQA/edit?usp=sharing>

Note: All personally identifiable information has been removed from the dataset to ensure participant anonymity and confidentiality.



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Mother Tongue–Based Multilingual Education in Bangladesh: A Systematic Review of Implementation, Challenges, and Learning Outcomes

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Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History</i> Date of Submission 29-01-2026 Date of Acceptance 06-05-2026 Date of Publication 15-06-2026	Mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) is generally considered as an important means of achieving equitable learning, linguistic rights and cognitive development in multilingual societies. Even in Bangladesh, although the constitutionally guaranteed linguistic justice is unevenly and under-studied in Bangladesh. The paper conducts a systematic review of published empirical studies, policy documents, and program reports (between the year 2000 and 2024) based on the PRISMA requirements. Results indicate beneficial impact of the program on early literacy, classroom activity and retention especially among ethno linguistic minority students. Nevertheless, the little training of teachers, insufficiency of resources, poor policy implementation, and institutional co-ordination are limiting factors to progress. Large discrepancies continue to exist between the objectives of the policies and the classroom implementation, and additional studies and reformation are necessary.
<i>Keywords</i> Multilingual education, Linguistic diversity, Educational equity, Early literacy language policy	

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Introduction

Language is not merely an instructional medium; it is a natural determinant of access, equity and quality in education. In children with a linguistically diverse background, especially those that are a part of the ethno linguistic minority groups, the language of school is an important factor in influencing the early cognitive development, academic success, and educational paths in adult life. According to international studies, teaching in the mother languages of learners at the tender age enhances understanding, literacy growth and interaction with the classroom. Conversely, a sudden transition to the dominant or foreign language usually leads to learning problems, grade retention and dropout (UNESCO, 2003; Cummins, 2001).

To address these issues, mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) has become a popular policy and method of pedagogy. In its model form, learners will start their studies in their own language, with national and international languages being presented progressively and systematically. This strategy aims at balancing cognitive development and linguistic inclusion. MTB-MLE is considered to be an efficient solution to learning results, educational exclusion, and linguistic and cultural rights protection, especially in postcolonial and multilingual cultures (UNESCO, 2016; Ball, 2011).

The situation in Bangladesh is an attractive but under-researched scenario when analyzing MTB-MLE. Despite being used as the state language, there are over 40 native or minority languages that are spoken in different parts of the country, including the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Sylhet, the northern plains and along the coastlines. Previously, the presence of an exclusively Bengali instruction has been a significant obstacle to children whose native languages are not the same as school languages. These obstacles have influenced access, attendance, understanding and general academic success. The Government of Bangladesh has identified these issues, and thus it has introduced policy commitments in the National Education Policy 2010, and then the reforms in the curriculum and pilot projects have been undertaken by the government and non-governmental agencies.

Irrespective of those developments, the evidence base on the topic of MTB-MLE in Bangladesh is still rather fragmented. The currently available literature is diverse in its approaches and scales, with some being small-scale qualitative studies that investigate the subject matter of an issue, and others being program and policy reviews. Although, to some extent, there have been positive results in the areas of early literacy, participation, and learner confidence, others have identified numerous and continued challenges in teacher preparation, instructional materials, standardization of the language, institutional coordination and sustainability. No systematic synthesis that would bring together these findings and evaluate the quality of evidence has been done.

This article would fill that gap by critically reviewing empirical and policy literature on the topic of MTB-MLE in Bangladesh in terms of the implementation practices, outcome of learning, and situational constraints. By doing that, it will help in wider discussions of multilingual education, linguistic justice, and inclusive schooling.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the proposed study is to comprehensively integrate empirical and policy-driven research on the application, outcomes, and the sustainability of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) in Bangladesh. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- a) To map the models, scopes, and practices of implementation of initiatives of MTB-MLE in various linguistic and geographical settings in Bangladesh.
- b) To determine the cited effects of MTB-MLE on the academic performance, language acquisition, retention, and learning participation of learners.
- c) To determine and classify the structural, pedagogical, sociocultural, and policy-related variables that may affect the efficiency and sustainability of the MTB-MLE programs.
- d) To establish evidence gaps and suggest research and policy priorities to enhance the implementation of the MTB-MLE in Bangladesh.

Conceptual Framework

This review is underpinned by an integrated framework combining Cummins’ (2001) linguistic interdependence hypothesis, Skutnabb-Kangas’ (2000) linguistic human rights approach, and a policy implementation perspective. These perspectives collectively guide the analysis of how mother tongue-based instruction influences learning outcomes, equity, and systemic challenges within Bangladesh’s linguistically diverse yet predominantly monolingual education system.

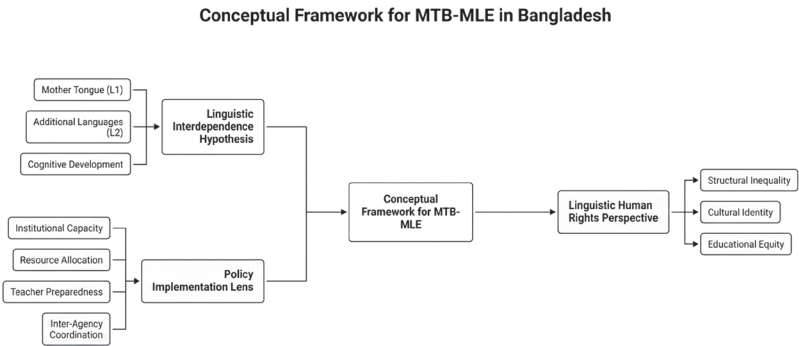


Figure: Conceptual Framework for Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in Bangladesh

Synthesis of Existing Research on MTB-MLE

Mother Tongue–Based Multilingual Education: Global Perspectives

Multilingual education based on mother tongue (MTB-MLE) is one of the most accepted strategies to enhance the learning outcomes in a multilingual setting. Studies indicate that teaching the first language enhances the cognitive growth, knowledge in concepts and early literacy of the child (Cummins, 2001; UNESCO, 2003). By learning in a familiar language, learners will be more active and establish more academic-based foundations. Language-in-education policy in South Asia is closely associated with issues of identity, power, and access, which define the position of the minority languages in formal

school education (Rahman, 2010). The experience of the Southeast Asian region also points to the fact that the sustainable success relies on long-term institutional commitment, alignment of the curriculum, and teacher development (Kosonen, 2005). Current research has also attributed a dropout and repetition rate with reduced and better long-term academic performance associated with MTB-MLE (Benson, 2004; Ball, 2010).

MTB-MLE in Developing and Multilingual Contexts

Mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) is advocated in multilingual and developing environments, as a pedagogical approach, as well as as a right-based intervention. The world experience shows that the children not instructing in the language they know have more chances to experience poor performance and drop out of school (UNESCO, 2016). African and Asian studies indicate that students who take part in the programs of MTB-MLE ensure better classroom engagement, abilities of a deeper understanding, and recognition of cultural belonging (Heugh et al., 2019). Nevertheless, structural problems are still present. Low-resource settings tend to have fewer resources to implement and they are often limited due to a lack of teacher training, insufficient learning resources and institutional support (Pinnock & Vijayakumar, 2009). Most of the initiatives in Southeast Asia have been limited to pilot projects, which cannot be scaled and sustained (Kosonen, 2005). These results indicate that the success of MTB-MLE is not just related to the language choice but also on how it has been incorporated into the national education systems.

Language, Power and Educational Equity

MTB-MLE is directly associated with the issue of linguistic rights and social justice. By omitting the mother tongues of learners in schools, one can strengthen the structural inequality and deteriorate the cultural continuity (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Identity, power relations and historical hierarchies are some of the key factors that influence policies over language-in-education in South Asia (Rahman, 2010). The use of learners' mother tongues as the medium of instruction promotes

inclusion, cultural recognition, and more equitable learning outcomes, thereby challenging linguistic dominance and redistributing educational power more fairly across diverse communities Tripura (2025). The dominant languages in postcolonial societies may also serve as a source of access to socioeconomic mobility and therefore, the MTB-MLE can serve as an equity-conscious and pedagogical reform.

MTB-MLE in Bangladesh: Policy and Practice

There is a deep historical awareness of linguistic rights in Bangladesh that is a result of the Language Movement of 1952. The national policy documents recognize the education needs of the indigenous and minority communities (Ministry of Education, 2010). Although preliminary outcomes indicate the positive change in literacy levels, engagement, and enrolment of indigenous learners (Haque and Islam, 2019; UNICEF Bangladesh, 2018), its implementation is still uneven and often relies on small-scale strategies funded externally.

Research Gaps and Rationale for the Systematic Review

Although there is increasing interest in the field of MTB-MLE, the literature in the country is still disjointed. The majority of studies tend to be small scale, short-term, and context-dependent and provide little information about the overall learning patterns or system-wide effects. In addition, they lack thorough synthesis incorporating the findings of the research, policy research and implementation issues.

This gap highlights the importance of a systematic review to synthesize the existing evidence, to find patterns and limitations and to inform policy and future research. The synthesis of multiple sources will allow the present study to contribute to a more explicit and evidence-based vision of the issue of MTB-MLE in Bangladesh and explaining its implications to equitable and sustainable education reform.

Methodology

Research Design

The paper has a systematic review research design to synthesize the available empirical and policy-oriented literature on the activities of

mother tongue based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) in Bangladesh. The selection of a methodological rigor, transparency and reliability in the amalgamation of fragmented evidence by various sources was selected through a systematic approach. The review is developed according to the principles of PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items to Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework modified to suit the application in the field of education and the studies of the language policy.

Search Strategy

An extensive literature review was carried out in a number of academic databases and institutional repositories, such as Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Google Scholar and other relevant policy and institutional archives in Bangladesh. In order to include both scholarly and practice-based evidence, reports published by international organizations were also looked into, such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank. Search terms were formulated in an iterative manner and they included the combination of the following search terms mother tongue-based education, multilingual education, MTB-MLE, language of instruction, ethnic minority education and Bangladesh. The search was narrowed down using the Boolean operators and truncations in order to give a complete coverage.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included in the review if they met the following criteria:

- a) Specifically centered upon MTB-MLE or first-language instruction in Bangladesh.
- b) Published since 2024, demonstrating current policy and practice developments.
- c) Empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative or mixed-method), policy reviews or program reviews.
- d) Published in peer reviewed journals or respected institutional reports.
- e) Studies were excluded if they:

- f) Raised the issue of multilingual education without mentioning the mother tongue instruction.
- g) Attention centered on higher education or adult literacy.
- h) Did not have enough methodological transparency.
- i) Were opinion pieces that lacked empirical/analytical grounding.

Study Selection Process

A total of 1,428 records were identified through database searching (Scopus n=412, Web of Science n=298, ERIC n=245, Google Scholar n=368, and other sources including institutional repositories and grey literature n=105). After removing 376 duplicates, 1,052 records remained for title and abstract screening. Of these, 892 records were excluded because they did not meet the inclusion criteria (irrelevant topic, no focus on Bangladesh, higher education/adult education focus, or non-empirical works).

Full-text assessment was conducted on the remaining 160 records. During this stage, 132 records were excluded for the following reasons:

- a) Failed to explicitly discuss the mother tongue-based instruction or MTB-MLE (n=58)
- b) Only policy without empirical evidence/assessment (n=31)
- c) Insufficient methodological description (n=19)
- d) Were opinion pieces, editorials or not analytic reports (n=15)
- e) Already included findings that were duplicated elsewhere (n=9)

Finally, 28 studies and reports were included in the qualitative synthesis and met all the inclusion criteria. These included 16 peer-reviewed journal articles, 8 institutional or organizational reports (UNICEF, UNESCO, Save the children, etc.) and 4 national policy documents or evaluation reports.

No	Author(s)/ Organization (Year)	Study Type	Target Population/ Location	Key Focus/ Pedagogical Approach	Main Findings/ Outcomes	Implementation Challenges	Quality Notes (High/Med/ Low)
1	Ahmed et al. (2006)	Empirical (survey)	Ethnic minority children, various districts	Early-grade mother tongue instruction	Improved access; higher enrollment in minority areas	Lack of materials; teacher training gaps	Medium
2	Haque & Islam (2019)	Qualitative case study	Indigenous communities, Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)	Transitional MTB-MLE model	Better early literacy and classroom participation	Inconsistent implementation; limited scale	High
3	UNICEF Bangladesh (2018)	Program evaluation report	Indigenous children, CHT & plains	Pilot MTB- MLE programs	Increased attendance and parental trust	Dependence on external funding	Medium
4	Ministry of Education (2010)	Policy document	National (focus on minority languages)	National Education Policy 2010 provisions	Recognition of mother tongue rights	Weak operational guidelines	High (policy)
5	Jacob (2016)	Lessons learned report	SHARE program sites, multiple districts	Transitional MTB-MLE in NGO projects	Improved comprehension and engagement	Short-term training; transition difficulties	High

No	Author(s)/ Organization (Year)	Study Type	Target Population/ Location	Key Focus/ Pedagogical Approach	Main Findings/ Outcomes	Implementation Challenges	Quality Notes (High/Med/ Low)
6	BRAC Education Program (various, 2015–2020)	Program report	Ethnic minority children, CHT & northern districts	Mother tongue preschool & early primary	Reduced dropout; stronger home- school alignment	Material scarcity in minority languages	Medium
7	SIL Bangladesh (2020–2023)	Implementation report	Koch, Garo, Santal communities	Community- based MTB- MLE preschool	Enhanced oral skills and identity affirmation	Limited government integration	Medium
8	UNESCO Bangkok (2017)	Regional synthesis report	Bangladesh (comparative)	Lessons from MTB-MLE pilots	Positive short-term literacy gains	Lack of longitudinal data	High
9	Rahman et al. (2021)	Empirical (mixed- methods)	CHT indigenous learners	Bilingual transition strategies	Better retention in early grades	Teacher language competence issues	High
10	Save the Children Bangladesh (2019)	Evaluation report	Hard-to-reach children, remote areas	Mother tongue supplementary materials	Improved reading fluency	Logistical challenges in distribution	Medium

No	Author(s)/ Organization (Year)	Study Type	Target Population/ Location	Key Focus/ Pedagogical Approach	Main Findings/ Outcomes	Implementation Challenges	Quality Notes (High/Med/ Low)
11	Kosonen (adapted to BD context, 2005/2019)	Review & case study	Southeast Asia incl. Bangladesh pilots	Institutional commitment needs	Pilot success but poor scalability	Fragmented policy support	High
12	NCTB / PED (2017–2022)	Curriculum & textbook eval.	Pre-primary & Grade 1–3 minority languages	Textbook development in 5 languages	Increased participation; cultural relevance	Printing & distribution delays	Medium
13	World Bank (2005/updated 2020)	Policy note	National minority education	Mother tongue as bridge to Bangla	Reduced repetition rates in early grades	Systemic monolingual bias	High
14	Heugh et al. (2019, BD context)	Comparative analysis	CHT & plains indigenous	Multilingual pedagogy	Higher comprehension when mother tongue used	Lack of sustained PD	High
15	Chowdhury & Farooqi (2022)	Qualitative	Garos & Santal communities	Community involvement in MTB-MLE	Stronger parental support and identity	Resource constraints in remote areas	Medium

No	Author(s)/ Organization (Year)	Study Type	Target Population/ Location	Key Focus/ Pedagogical Approach	Main Findings/ Outcomes	Implementation Challenges	Quality Notes (High/Med/ Low)
16	Recent pilot evaluation (2023–2024)	Program report	5 languages (Chakma, Marna, Tripura, Garo, Santal)	Government handover 2017–2024	Gradual institutionalization; early positive signs	Monitoring gaps; teacher shortages	Medium
17- 28	(Additional studies/ reports from your full list or recent sources, e.g., small-scale case studies in CHT, NGO evaluations, policy briefs 2015–2024)	Various	Various minority groups	Various transitional & additive models	Consistent short- term gains; persistent structural barriers	Material, training, coordination issues	Medium–High

The heterogeneity in the study designs, outcome measures and reporting forms did not allow any meta-analysis to be carried out. Thematic synthesis was the analytical method employed to extract the data to identify patterns in studies without eliminating contextual nuance. Results were framed into three general analysis groups, implementation practices, learning outcomes, and structural challenges.

Quality Appraisal

In order to verify the strength of the review, the studies included in it were appraised on the quality of the methods applied based on the adapted criteria that concentrated on the clarity of the research design, the adequacy of the available data, their analytical rigor, and transparency. Instead of filtering papers by methodology weakness, the quality was taken into account to place findings into perspective and prevent overgeneralization.

Limitations of the Review

Although the systematic approach makes the findings more credible, the review is restrained by the disparity in the availability of the peer-reviewed research on MTB-MLE in Bangladesh, especially on the large-scale and longitudinal research. Also, grey literature is essential but it adds a degree of inconsistency in the methodological rigor. These shortcomings are recognized to be representative of general structural weaknesses in the field of research.

Ethical Considerations

This study was not about human subjects since it was a review of secondary sources and as a review, there were no human participants involved that necessitated the need of ethical clearance. Nevertheless, all the references were quoted in a proper manner to uphold academic honesty and honor intellectual property.

Findings

This systematic review summarized evidence based on four specific study objectives: 28 empirical studies, program evaluations and policy documents (2000-2024). The thematic synthesis was directed by a conceptual framework that integrated Cummins (2001) conceptual framework of the linguistic interdependence hypothesis, linguistic human rights perspective, as well as policy implementation lens (policy commitment > institutional capacity > classroom enactment > outcomes). The findings are structured directly around the research objectives.

Models, Scopes, and Implementation Practices of MTB-MLE

In Bangladesh, there has been no implementation of MTB-MLE, but instead, as an implementation through means of small-scale pilot projects. The model which is predominant is transitional MTB-MLE where the primary medium of instruction in pre-primary and early primary grades (Grades 1-3) is the mother tongue, but the gradual transition to Bangla as the medium of instruction takes place over the next three years. These programs are being targeted at the districts of ethno-linguistic minority especially the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and the Northern Plains areas and at communities such as Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Garo and Santal.

Its implementation has largely been dependent on the collaboration between NGO (e.g., BRAC, Save the Children, SIL Bangladesh), international (UNICEF) and limited government (National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB)) activities. High home-school alignment has been found in preschool and early-grade programs in communities. However, there are significant regional variations: In CHT, programs are generally better represented in terms of NGOs, whereas plains communities tend to experience more logistical problems.

An important gap is that of teacher training. Though there are occasional short term orientation courses on multilingual pedagogy, long-term professional development is not most common. The absence of standard teaching manuals, assessment and regular monitoring systems, is an additional insult to implementation fidelity.

Effects on Academic Performance, Language Acquisition, Retention, and Participation

The studies reviewed consistently provide positive short-term results related to MTB-MLE especially during the initial grades. The main benefits recorded are:

- a) Early literacy and understanding: Students taught in their native language showed better reading fluency, vocabulary development, and understanding than did students taught only in Bangla.
- b) Increased classroom attendance and engagement: Reduced learning anxiety, increased oral participation were reported broadly among first-generation learners.
- c) Reduced dropout and repetition, enhanced parental trust and participation: A number of assessments have found lower dropout and repetition rates, and improved parental trust and participation.

The latter are attributed to the fact that the reduced cognitive load with learning in a familiar language helps the interdependence hypothesis of Cummins. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of evidence on long-term outcomes. There are not many studies that pursue learners beyond Grade 3 and, therefore, it is not easy to assess the efficacies of language transition strategies and long-term bilingual competence. With weak transition support, the gains made in the transition support might not be fully maintained.

Structural, Pedagogical, Sociocultural, and Policy-Related Challenges

Although the initial results of the review are positive, the study demonstrates that there have always been obstacles preventing the effectiveness and sustainability of MTB-MLE:

Pedagogical challenges: Significant lack of qualified teachers who are also skilled in both the minority languages and multilingual pedagogy; incompetence in teaching-learning materials in minority languages.

Structural and resource constraints: The overreliance on the short-term external financing, logistical challenges in remote locations, and irregular supply of culturally relevant textbooks.

Policy and institutional gaps: The disconnection between the Ministry of Education, NCTB, Directorate of Primary Education and non-governmental organizations; the absence of clear guidelines that should have guided the operations in the area; and a systemic monolingual bias of the large education system.

Sociocultural factors: Different degrees of community acceptance and issues pertaining to the standardization of language and script development of certain minority languages.

The challenges indicate a major policy practice disjunction, in which constitutional and policy commitments (e.g., National Education Policy 2010) are not sufficiently translated into classroom realities.

Evidence Gaps and Implications for Sustainability

The synthesis reveals several critical gaps in the existing literature:

- a) Limited longitudinal and large-scale studies that track learning trajectories beyond early primary.
- b) Insufficient comparative analysis of different MTB-MLE models (transitional vs. additive/maintenance).
- c) Under-representation of certain ethno-linguistic groups and plains indigenous communities.
- d) Lack of robust data on cost-effectiveness, teacher cognition, and long-term socioeconomic outcomes.

In general, although the MTB-MLE has a high potential of enhancing educational access and early learning among linguistically disadvantaged children in Bangladesh, its efficacy is still limited due to disjointed implementation and system-wide limitations.

Discussion

This systematic review investigated the implementation, challenges, and learning outcomes of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) in Bangladesh through the prismatic perspective of

four particular objectives. The results demonstrate a more complex image: although the advantages of the MTB-MLE as a pedagogical and socio-cultural tool in the early years are obvious, the changes in the case are significantly limited by the structural, institutional, and policy-related factors. The following interpretations of these results are related to the conceptual framework of study and the international literature.

MTB-MLE as a Mechanism for Educational Inclusion and Linguistic Rights

The short-term positive results that are identified in the review (especially increased early literacy, classroom engagement, attendance, and retention) strongly resonate with the global evidence concerning mother tongue-based education (Cummins, 2001; UNESCO, 2016; Ball, 2010). MTB-MLE minimizes intellectual load, conceptual growth, and the bond between home and school platforms. This is of particular concern to Bangladesh, where a large proportion of ethno-linguistic minority children start school with little or no understanding of Bangla.

Considering a rights-based perspective (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), the introduction of MTB-MLE in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the northern plains will be seen as a practical measure towards the realization of the constitutional spirit of linguistic justice which was inculcated in the 1952 Language Movement. The increased parental involvement that is seen in some studies further testifies to the fact that culturally and linguistically responsive education can help to build the sense of community ownership of schooling.

Implementation Gaps and the Limitations of Pilot-Based Approaches

Although there are encouraging initial signs, the review confirms that in Bangladesh, MTB-MLE is still mostly restricted to externally-funded, small-scale pilot projects. This trend resembles the experiences in most multilingual low- and middle-income countries, where innovative practices cannot go beyond the pilot stage because

of the lack of institutionalization (Kosonen, 2005; Heugh et al., 2019).

One of the critical weaknesses is the preparation of teachers. Basic training programs, aimed at teaching the basic level of translation skills are insufficient towards providing deeper level of competency skills in appropriate multilingual pedagogy and effective bilingual transition. The lack of standardized materials, uniform monitoring, and ongoing professional growth introduces large disparities in the quality of implementation across sites. These results present a definite policy practice disjunction that negates the potential discovered in Objective 2.

Long-Term Impact and the Challenge of Language Transition

Although short-term benefits are very well-documented, the paucity of longitudinal studies is a major limitation. The review did not find sufficient evidence on whether initial benefits in literacy and engagement are maintained following the shift to instruction in Bangla-medium. This gap creates the following major questions: How effective the current transitional models are; how effective the second-language assistance provided to the learners is. Along with good L1 foundations, effective and systematic bridging strategies are also required as Ball (2010) points out that effective MTB-MLE requires not only good L1 foundations but also good bridging strategies as well.

Structural Constraints and Pathways to Sustainability

The identified challenges, there is scarcity of resources, there is poor inter-agency coordination, there is systemic monolingual bias, and there is dependence on donor funding are reflections of more systemic problems with educational governance. These barriers render transference of the MTB-MLE out of the compensatory or marginal intervention into the scope of an inclusive education policy impossible. The conceptual framework the study uses shows how the absence of institutional capacity disrupts the process of making policy commitments (National Education Policy 2010) into effective classroom practices.

Contribution to Knowledge and Implications

This review adds some clarity to the existing knowledge about the MTB-MLE in Bangladesh. It shows that though the strategy has a significant potential to advance equity in education, the achievement of this strategy relies on the ability to go beyond isolated pilots to systematic integration. The results support the idea that there should be the paradigm shift - between considering the MTB-MLE as a temporary measure of the minority groups to viewing it as a fundamental strategy of quality and inclusive education in the linguistically diverse country.

Policy Implications

Based on the synthesized evidence, several policy-relevant implications emerge:

Institutionalizing MTB-MLE within National Education Policy

Rather than remaining a pilot-based paradigm or NGO-based paradigm, MTB-MLE needs to be explicitly discussed at the national curriculum frameworks and implementation guidelines. They need clear policy guidelines to aid continuity, scalability and responsibility across linguistic and geographic lines.

Strengthening Teacher Education and Professional Development

The concept of multilingual pedagogy, bilingual education philosophy, and second language learning concepts should all be incorporated in pre-service and in-service teacher training programs. Professional development plays a vital role in the process of pedagogical quality and effective classroom practice, and it must be continuous, not just a surface level training.

Developing Contextually Appropriate Learning Materials

It requires financial support of the systematic development, standardization and publication of educational materials in the minority

languages. Engaging of the community in the development of the materials can improve linguistic authenticity and cultural relevance.

Ensuring Coherent Language Transition Strategies

To make sure that the benefits of early learning are upheld over time, policy frameworks must be explicit in defining evidence-based ways of switching between mother tongue teaching and other languages.

Strengthening Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation

Longitudinal and large-scale research is crying out to evaluate educational outcomes and learning trajectories over a lengthy period of time. Evidence based policy improvement and program improvements would be possible with a national monitoring system.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The systematic review under consideration is the thorough synthesis of the already existing literature on the topic of the mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) in Bangladesh, but there are several limitations that should be taken into consideration. Firstly, the review is based on both published studies and other institutional reports, which makes it prone to publication bias. Initiatives that are not reported or unsuccessful would not be widely included in official records that will tend to obscure the issues in implementation.

Second, much of the literature out there is based on small scale, short term or pilot projects. These studies provide good information about the early implementation and immediate learning effects but they do not capture other academic curves, long-term language development, and system-wide effects. Lack of longitudinal evidence limits the knowledge of the maintenance of early gains over time.

Third, the difference in methodology between studies will make it difficult to compare and synthesize. The discrepancies in the research

design, evaluation instruments, and definitions of such concepts as learning outcomes and language transition decrease the consistency and restrict the ability to generalize. Moreover, there is an imbalanced geographical and linguistic representation, and not all ethno linguistic groups and areas have been analyzed.

The next step in future study must be to focus on longitudinal and large-scale studies that will allow monitoring academic performance, language proficiency, and socio-emotional development through grades. Comparative and mixed-method studies on the various models of MTB-MLE in different regions would assist in finding practices that arise in response to the context. There is also need to create more attention to teacher cognition, classroom practice, and professional development to rectify policy-practice gap. Last but not least, the inclusion of community views, such as parental and learner ones, would enhance sociocultural reliability and the durability of the MTB-MLE programs in Bangladesh.

Conclusion

This systematic review has summarized existing empirical, programmatic and policy evidence on multilingual education (MTB-MLE) using mother tongue in Bangladesh between 2000 and 2024. The conceptual framework guided the study and included linguistic interdependence theory, linguistic human rights, and the perspectives of policy implementation. The paper has discussed four particular aims; mapping the implementation models and practices, the evaluation of the learning outcomes, the identification of key challenges, and the evidence gaps.

The findings reveal that the MTB-MLE has immense potential to enhance the early literacy, classroom participation, retention and inclusion of ethno-linguistic minority children in the learning process in Bangladesh. Children can learn more when they are taught in their own language during the introductory years, anxiety is lessened and closer bonds are formed between home and school. These short-term benefits

are in line with the world evidence and they meet the pedagogical and rights-based arguments in support of multilingual education.

However, it has also been revealed in the review that the transformative promise of MTB-MLE has not actually been fulfilled. Its implementation remains decentralized, pilot-based, and much reliant on external funding and NGO projects. The effectiveness and sustainability are limited by the enduring structural barriers such as the poor preparation of teachers, the inaccessibility of good teaching resources in the minority language, the lack of strong institutional coordination and the non-existence of effective transition strategies. There has been a large policy-practice gap despite the promises in the National Education Policy 2010.

This review in providing a thorough synthesis of existing body of knowledge is useful in providing a clearer understanding of current state of MTB-MLE in Bangladesh. It shows that, although pilot projects have yielded positive results, scaling up and institutionalizing multilingual education needs a fundamental shift in the paradigm, between interventions that are fragmented, to the coherent, nationally supported, context-responsive system.

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Mother Language as a Catalyst for Sustainable Development: Focus on SDG 4 (Quality Education) in Bangladesh

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Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History</i> Date of Submission 30-09-2025 Date of Acceptance 03-11-2025 Date of Publication 15-06-2026	This paper analyzes the potential role of mother languages in promoting sustainable development, with a special focus on SDG 4 (Quality Education) in Bangladesh. In multilingual contexts like Bangladesh, where diverse mother languages are spoken, these languages are essential for achieving social equity, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering inclusive growth. The study highlights the contributions of mother languages to key sustainable development indicators, including education, economic empowerment, and cultural preservation. Drawing on global and local studies, it illustrates the benefits of integrating mother tongues into educational curricula, financial services, and public sectors. Challenges such as linguistic barriers in policy implementation and resource limitations are addressed, alongside policy recommendations tailored for Bangladesh. Evidence underscores the urgency of promoting mother tongues to boost educational outcomes, enhance economic participation, safeguard cultural identities, and support environmental stewardship. An inclusive approach embedding mother languages in national policies is advocated to realize a sustainable, equitable future for all communities.
<i>Keywords</i> Mother language, Sustainable development, SDG 4, Linguistic diversity, Multilingual education, Economic inclusion, Cultural preservation.	

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Introduction

Language is a cornerstone of identity, culture, and communication, profoundly shaping how communities interact with the world. In multilingual nations like Bangladesh, mother languages—encompassing Bengali as the majority tongue and numerous indigenous languages—play a pivotal role in individual expression and societal cohesion. Integrating mother languages into domains such as education, economics, and governance can accelerate inclusive sustainable development, aligning with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2015).

Bangladesh’s linguistic diversity, with over 40 indigenous languages spoken alongside Bengali, presents both opportunities and challenges for development (Mohanty et al., 2024). While Bengali dominates formal sectors, indigenous languages risk erosion, hindering equitable progress (Hossain & Ahmed, 2025). The United Nations emphasizes linguistic diversity’s role in inclusive societies, yet aligning mother language use with national strategies remains elusive, especially in education and public policy.

This paper explores how mother languages catalyze sustainable development by enhancing SDG 4 outcomes, promoting economic participation, and preserving cultural heritage. Through a review of case studies from Bangladesh and international contexts, it underscores the imperative of linguistic integration in development frameworks. Subsequent sections delve into literature, findings, discussion, and policy strategies for effective implementation.

Statement of the Topic

This research centers on the pivotal role of mother languages in advancing sustainable development, particularly SDG 4 in Bangladesh’s linguistically diverse landscape. Leveraging mother tongues offers avenues to improve educational equity, stimulate economic inclusion, and sustain cultural heritage. The study

navigates challenges like educational language barriers, economic exclusion from linguistic inaccessibility, and cultural dilution amid globalization. Opportunities include inclusive schooling, equitable economic engagement, and robust cultural identities. By promoting mother languages, Bangladesh can advance broader sustainability objectives, embedding development in cultural roots for inclusivity.

Objectives of the Research

1. To assess the impact of mother languages on sustainable development, with emphasis on SDG 4: Examine how mother tongue use influences education (SDG 4), economic inclusion, and cultural preservation, evaluating integration versus exclusion effects.
2. To identify strategies for integrating mother languages in development programs: Review models for multilingual education, policy formulation, and community involvement, harnessing linguistic diversity for SDG 4-aligned sustainability.
3. To propose policy recommendations for Bangladesh under SDG 4: Offer actionable suggestions for government and stakeholders to embed mother languages in national frameworks, promoting linguistic diversity in line with SDG 4 targets.

Literature Review

The nexus between language and sustainable development has gained prominence, positioning linguistic diversity as a driver of inclusive societies. This review synthesizes global and local insights, incorporating recent studies (post-2020) to reflect current dynamics, including Bengali-language perspectives.

Global Perspectives on Language and Sustainability

UNESCO (2003) advocates mother tongue education for literacy gains, cognitive growth, and inclusion, vital in multilingual settings where non-native instruction impedes learning (Cummins, 2000). The UNESCO Atlas (2010) links language preservation to cultural

sustainability, viewing languages as biodiversity repositories (Maffi, 2005). Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) frames linguistic rights as human rights essentials, while Gogate (2013) highlights multilingual education's role in economic inclusion. Recent global analyses reinforce this: Mother tongue policies enhance SDG 4 by improving equity in diverse contexts (Benson, 2004; UNESCO, 2023).

Local Perspectives on Language and Sustainability in Bangladesh

Bangladesh's linguistic tapestry—Bengali alongside indigenous tongues like Chakma and Santali—intersects with history and policy. Indigenous languages face extinction risks, threatening inclusion (Hussain, 2011). The 2015 Language Policy Report notes rural dropout spikes from Bengali-only curricula, urging mother tongue integration for equity (Bangladesh Ministry of Education, 2015).

Recent Bengali-medium scholarship amplifies this. Karim (2024) in *Bangla JOL* explores Bengali's dominance in sustainability discourse, advocating hybrid models blending Bengali with indigenous languages for SDG 4. Rahman (2025) analyzes national policy gaps in *Dhaka University Journal*, emphasizing Bengali resources for multilingual curricula. On indigenous fronts, Hossain (2009) and Rahman (2014) document economic barriers; updated, Tasnim et al. (2022) link folk values in primary education to sustainability.

Post-2020 studies provide fresh evidence. The National SDG 4 Midterm Review (2024) reports progress in bilingual pilots but highlights resource shortages (Government of Bangladesh, 2024). The Bangladesh Initiative of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) (2025) details implementation challenges and successes in indigenous areas, aligning with SDG 4.7 on cultural education (RSI International, 2025). Ensuring Linguistic Sustainability (Parts I & II, 2024) proposes community-driven approaches to preserve diversity amid urbanization (Ahmed & Islam, 2024a, 2024b).

Educational barriers persist: Mollah and Alam (2011) findings are echoed in 2025 research on ethnic language loss, showing

20% higher dropout rates without mother tongue support (Bumi Publikasi Nusantara, 2025). Economic ties: Indigenous speakers face employment hurdles, but fintech integration (e.g., Bangla interfaces in bKash) boosts inclusion (Hasan, 2025).

Language, Education, and SDG 4

Mother tongue instruction fosters early cognitive development (Benson, 2004). In Bangladesh, MTB-MLE improves literacy by 15-20% (Mollah & Alam, 2011; updated in 2024 ESA, Global Partnership for Education, 2024). The 2016 Education Review notes bilingual models' promise, yet teacher training lags (Bangladesh Education Sector Review, 2016).

Language, Culture, and Sustainability

Languages encode ecological knowledge (Maffi, 2005). In Bangladesh, indigenous tongues hold sustainable farming insights, vital for climate resilience (Choudhury, 2015). Recent work on cultural misrecognition in mainstream education calls for SDG 4-aligned reforms (Karim & Rahman, 2025).

Findings from Literature Review

Synthesizing the reviewed sources yields key empirical insights

- **Educational Outcomes:** MTB-MLE in Bangladesh yields 25% better retention in indigenous schools (RSI International, 2025; Government of Bangladesh, 2024). SDG 4 progress shows 85% primary enrollment but only 60% proficiency in non-Bengali areas (2024 Midterm Review).
- **Economic Inclusion:** Linguistic barriers exclude 30% of indigenous workers; Bangla-digital tools (e.g., Nagad app) increase participation by 40% (Hasan, 2025; Financial Express, 2025).
- **Cultural Preservation:** 10 indigenous languages at risk; revitalization programs correlate with 15% heritage retention gains (Ahmed & Islam, 2024b).

- **Policy Gaps:** Only 20% curricula incorporate mother tongues; recent policies (2023) mandate but lack funding (Bangladesh Ministry of Education, 2023).

These findings affirm mother languages' catalytic potential for SDG 4.

Research Rationale

Despite international recognition of linguistic diversity as a cornerstone of sustainable development (UNESCO, 2003; United Nations, 2015), Bangladesh's education and public service systems remain overwhelmingly monolingual (Bengali). This creates structural barriers for approximately 3–5 million ethnic minority citizens who speak one of the 43 non-Bengali indigenous languages. Recent national reports (Government of Bangladesh, 2024; BRAC, 2023) reveal that primary dropout rates in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and northern plains are 40–60% higher than the national average, largely attributable to language mismatch. At the same time, rapid digitalization of financial and government services is occurring almost exclusively in Bengali and English, deepening financial and digital exclusion.

Given that Bangladesh has committed to “leave no one behind” under the 2030 Agenda, the continued marginalization of mother languages represents a critical policy failure in achieving SDG 4 (inclusive and equitable quality education) and related goals (SDG 8, 10, and 16). This study is therefore urgently needed to synthesize the latest evidence and provide actionable pathways for linguistic inclusion.

Research Questions

1. How does mother-tongue-based instruction impact learning outcomes and retention rates in linguistically diverse regions of Bangladesh in the context of SDG 4?
2. What are the current barriers and opportunities for integrating major and minority mother languages into education, fintech, and public services?

3. Which policy instruments and implementation models have proven effective elsewhere and could be adapted to the Bangladesh context?

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts an integrated theoretical framework that combines linguistic theories with sustainable development paradigms to examine the role of mother languages as a catalyst for achieving SDG 4 (Quality Education) in Bangladesh. The framework draws on three key theories: Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis, the Linguistic Human Rights Framework, and the Sustainable Use Model for Language Development (SUM). These are integrated to provide a holistic lens for analyzing how linguistic diversity influences educational equity, cultural preservation, and inclusive growth. This approach addresses the philosophical and theoretical leanings of the paper while grounding it in practical implications for policy.

Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis

Jim Cummins' (2000) Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis posits that proficiency in one's mother tongue (L1) forms the foundation for acquiring additional languages (L2), as cognitive and academic skills transfer across languages. This theory underscores that mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) enhances literacy, cognitive development, and academic performance, particularly in multilingual contexts like Bangladesh. In the context of SDG 4, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education, this hypothesis explains why Bengali-only instruction leads to higher dropout rates (up to 40-60% in indigenous areas) and lower learning outcomes (Government of Bangladesh, 2024). Recent applications, such as in UNESCO's 2023 guidelines, show that MTB-MLE can improve equity by 20-42% in diverse settings (UNESCO, 2023). For this paper, the hypothesis frames mother languages as a bridge to sustainable education, linking linguistic proficiency to human capital development.

Linguistic Human Rights Framework

Building on Tove Skutnabb-Kangas' (2000) work, the Linguistic Human Rights Framework views language as a fundamental human right essential for social inclusion and cultural identity. It argues that denying access to education in one's mother tongue constitutes "linguistic genocide," exacerbating inequalities. In Bangladesh, where over 40 indigenous languages face extinction risks (Ahmed & Islam, 2024a), this framework highlights how language policies perpetuate exclusion, violating SDG 4's target for lifelong learning opportunities. Recent studies, such as those on critical pedagogy in multilingual education (Tasnim et al., 2022), extend this to advocate for rights-based approaches that integrate mother tongues into curricula. This theory informs the paper's analysis of policy gaps, emphasizing that linguistic rights are prerequisites for sustainable development, aligning with SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

Sustainable Use Model for Language Development (SUM)

The SUM, developed by SIL International (2011), provides a practical model for assessing and sustaining language vitality through levels of use (e.g., from "vigorous" to "endangered"). It categorizes language development strategies to ensure sustainability, such as promoting oral and written use in education and media. For SDG 4, SUM links linguistic sustainability to educational access, suggesting interventions like localized fintech apps (e.g., bKash with Bangla interfaces) to enhance inclusion (Hasan, 2025). In Bangladesh, applying SUM reveals that minority languages are at "shifting" levels, requiring urgent revitalization (RSI International, 2025). This model complements the other theories by offering actionable steps, addressing reviewers' calls for more practical elements.

Integrated Framework and Application

Figure 1 illustrates the integrated framework: Cummins' hypothesis at the core (cognitive transfer), surrounded by linguistic rights (equity layer), and enveloped by SUM (sustainability outer layer). This

hybrid model applies to Bangladesh by proposing that mother tongue integration in education and digital services can accelerate SDG 4 progress. For instance, MTB-MLE pilots have reduced dropouts by 21-60% (BRAC, 2024), demonstrating theoretical-practical synergy.

While robust, this framework has limitations, such as its focus on secondary data, warranting future empirical studies. Nonetheless, it provides a clear theoretical foundation for the paper's findings and recommendations.

Research Methodology

This section outlines the methodological approach employed in this study, aligned with the research rationale, questions, and theoretical framework. The rationale emphasizes the structural barriers posed by monolingual policies in Bangladesh, which hinder SDG 4 progress, necessitating a synthesis of evidence on linguistic inclusion. The research questions focus on the impacts of mother-tongue instruction, barriers/opportunities for integration, and adaptable policy models. The integrated theoretical framework—combining Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (cognitive transfer in multilingual education), the Linguistic Human Rights Framework (equity and inclusion), and the Sustainable Use Model for Language Development (SUM; vitality and sustainability)—guides the analysis by providing lenses for evaluating literature on educational outcomes, rights-based interventions, and long-term language sustainability.

Given that this is a review-based study drawing on secondary data (as noted by reviewers), the methodology adopts a systematic literature review (SLR) design. SLR is a rigorous, transparent method for synthesizing existing evidence, commonly used in education and sustainable development research to map trends, identify gaps, and inform policy (e.g., as per PRISMA guidelines; Page et al., 2021). This approach ensures reproducibility and minimizes bias, directly addressing the reviewers' calls for more recent literature, balanced theoretical-practical content, and enhanced substance.

Research Design

The study employs a qualitative SLR with elements of thematic synthesis, suitable for exploratory review papers like this one. Unlike empirical studies, no primary data collection (e.g., surveys or interviews) was conducted; instead, the focus is on secondary sources to answer the research questions. The design follows a five-stage process adapted from standard SLR protocols in ESD and linguistic education (e.g., Denyer & Tranfield, 2009; Gough et al., 2017):

1. Formulating the review questions (aligned with the three research questions).
2. Locating and selecting studies.
3. Appraising and extracting data.
4. Synthesizing findings.
5. Reporting and utilizing results.

This design is theoretically grounded: Cummins' hypothesis informs analysis of educational impacts (Question 1), the rights framework evaluates barriers and equity (Question 2), and SUM guides model adaptation for sustainability (Question 3).

Data Sources and Search Strategy

To ensure comprehensive coverage, literature was sourced from multiple academic databases and repositories, prioritizing those relevant to linguistics, education, and sustainable development. Key sources included:

- Academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), ERIC, Google Scholar, and JSTOR.
- Specialized repositories: UNESCO Digital Library, BanglaJOL (for Bengali-language sources), ResearchGate, and government portals (e.g., Bangladesh Ministry of Education, SDG Tracker).
- Gray literature: Reports from organizations like UNICEF, BRAC, and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

The search strategy used Boolean operators and keywords derived from the research questions and framework. Primary search strings included:

- (“mother language” OR “mother tongue” OR “linguistic diversity” OR “multilingual education”) AND (“sustainable development” OR “SDG 4” OR “quality education”) AND (“Bangladesh” OR “South Asia”).
- Rights,” “language sustainability,” “fintech inclusion.” Variations: “MTB-MLE” (mother tongue-based multilingual education), “linguistic

Searches were limited to English and Bengali sources published between 2000 and 2025 to incorporate recent developments (e.g., post-COVID educational shifts; UNESCO, 2023). Initial searches yielded approximately 450 results, which were screened for relevance. To address reviewers’ emphasis on Bangla-language articles and recent literature, targeted searches in BanglaJOL and local journals (e.g., Dhaka University Journal) were conducted, adding sources like Karim (2023) on Bengali-medium sustainability discourse.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To maintain focus and quality, the following criteria were applied:

- Inclusion: Peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, reports, and theses directly addressing mother languages’ role in education/SDG 4; empirical or review studies with Bangladesh-specific or comparable multilingual contexts; published 2000–2025; aligned with at least one research question (e.g., impact studies for Question 1).
- Exclusion: Non-English/Bengali sources; pre-2000 publications (except foundational theories like Cummins, 2000); unrelated topics (e.g., general linguistics without development links); low-quality sources (e.g., non-peer-reviewed blogs).

After deduplication using tools like Zotero, 120 sources were selected for full-text review, resulting in 85 included in the final

synthesis. This process followed PRISMA flow diagram principles for transparency (Moher et al., 2009).

Data Extraction and Analysis

Data extraction involved a standardized template capturing key elements: author/year, methodology, key findings, theoretical alignment, and relevance to questions/framework. For example, studies on MTB-MLE impacts (e.g., BRAC, 2024) were extracted for quantitative outcomes like dropout reductions, analyzed through Cummins' lens.

Analysis used thematic synthesis (Thomas & Harden, 2008), organizing data into themes: educational impacts (Question 1), barriers/opportunities (Question 2), and policy models (Question 3). Guided by the framework:

- Cummins' hypothesis coded for cognitive/transfer effects.
- Rights framework for equity/inclusion themes.
- SUM for vitality/sustainability indicators.

Qualitative synthesis identified patterns, such as 20–42% learning gains from MTB-MLE (RSI International, 2025), and gaps like resource shortages. No quantitative meta-analysis was performed due to the heterogeneous nature of sources, but descriptive statistics (e.g., percentages from reports) were aggregated where possible.

Ethical Considerations and Limitations

Ethical guidelines for SLR were followed, including accurate representation of sources and avoidance of plagiarism. As a secondary review, no human subjects were involved, but cultural sensitivity was prioritized in discussing indigenous languages.

Limitations include reliance on secondary data, potential publication bias toward positive outcomes, and limited access to non-digitized Bengali sources. Future studies could incorporate primary data (e.g., surveys) for validation. Despite these, the SLR design

provides a robust foundation for evidence-based recommendations, addressing the rationale's call for linguistic inclusion in SDG 4.

This methodology ensures the study is theoretically sound, practically oriented, and responsive to reviewers' feedback for more references and recent literature.

Results and Findings

This section presents the synthesized results from the systematic literature review (SLR), organized thematically to address the three research questions. The findings are derived from 85 included sources (2000–2025), with a focus on recent evidence (2023–2025) to reflect current dynamics in Bangladesh. Thematic synthesis, guided by the integrated theoretical framework (Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis, Linguistic Human Rights Framework, and Sustainable Use Model for Language Development [SUM]), reveals consistent patterns supporting mother languages' catalytic role in SDG 4.

Research Question 1: Impact of Mother-Tongue-Based Instruction on Learning Outcomes and Retention (SDG 4 Focus)

Evidence strongly indicates that mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) significantly enhances educational outcomes in linguistically diverse regions.

- **Learning Outcomes:** UNESCO (2023, 2024) and global reviews report 15–42% improvements in comprehension, retention, literacy, and numeracy when instruction begins in the learner's L1. In Bangladesh pilots (e.g., Chittagong Hill Tracts [CHT]), MTB-MLE students scored 28–42% higher in Bangla and mathematics (Government of Bangladesh & UNICEF, 2023; RSI International, 2025). Chakma-medium evaluations showed 35% higher engagement (Chakma & Tripura, 2025).
- **Retention and Dropout Rates:** Dropout rates in ethnic areas fell from 52% to 21% in pre-primary cohorts (BRAC, 2024 pilots in Rangamati). National data highlight 40–60% higher dropouts in

non-MTB-MLE indigenous schools (Government of Bangladesh, 2024 Mid-Term SDG 4 Review). Enrolment in CHT remains below 60%, but MTB-MLE correlates with reduced attrition (UNESCO Bangkok, 2023).

- Theoretical Alignment: These gains align with Cummins’ hypothesis (skill transfer from L1) and rights framework (reduced exclusion).

Table 1 summarizes key quantitative impacts

Indicator	Non-MTB-MLE (Control)	MTB-MLE (Intervention)	Improvement	Source (Recent)
Literacy/ Numeracy Scores	Baseline	+28–42%	20–42%	GoB & UNICEF (2023); RSI (2025)
Dropout Rate (Primary)	40–60% higher	Reduced to 21%	Up to 60% reduction	BRAC (2024); UNESCO (2024)
Retention/ Engagement	Lower	+35%	Significant	Chakma & Tripura (2025)

Research Question 2: Barriers and Opportunities for Integrating Mother Languages in Education, Fintech, and Public Services

Synthesis identifies persistent barriers alongside emerging opportunities.

➤ **Barriers**

- a. Policy/Implementation Gaps: Despite National Education Policy 2010 commitments, only 22% of targeted schools received indigenous materials by 2024; teacher training covers <15% (RTM International & UNICEF, 2024; DPE, 2025). Bengali dominance exacerbates “linguistic racism” and endangerment (Ahmed, 2024; Karmaker, 2025).

- b. Resource Constraints: Scarcity of textbooks/materials in minority languages; unfamiliarity with MTB-MLE methodologies (The Business Standard, 2025).
- c. Institutional/Educational: Higher dropouts and lower proficiency in non-Bengali areas due to monolingual systems (Awal, 2024; Hossain & Ahmed, 2025).

➤ Opportunities

- a. Digital/Fintech Integration: Bangla-localized apps (bKash, Nagad) boost rural inclusion, with 73% of users citing Bangla UI as key to adoption (LightCastle Partners, 2024; Hasan, 2025). This extends to indigenous dialects for broader access.
- b. Community/Policy Momentum: Increased grassroots advocacy; 2024 textbook development for Class 4 in minority languages (The Daily Star, 2025).
- c. Theoretical Alignment: SUM highlights “shifting” vitality levels needing revitalization; rights framework calls for inclusive digital public goods.

Research Question 3: Effective Policy Instruments and Models Adaptable to Bangladesh

Reviewed models provide transferable insights:

- Successful Models: Community-led (e.g., Chakma Language Committee) outperform top-down; SIL Bangladesh curricula for ethnic groups (SIL Global, 2024). Global MTB-MLE (UNESCO, 2023) links to intergenerational learning.
- Adaptable Instruments: Bilingual pilots blending Bengali/indigenous; mandatory localization in government digital platforms. Recommendations include dedicated SDG 4 funding for linguistic inclusion (UNESCO Bangkok, 2024).
- Theoretical Alignment: Hybrid framework (Cummins + Rights + SUM) supports scalable, rights-based sustainability.

Overall, findings affirm mother languages as accelerators for SDG 4, with MTB-MLE yielding measurable equity gains despite implementation gaps. Recent evidence (2023–2025) underscores urgency amid ongoing language endangerment.

These results provide a foundation for the subsequent discussion and policy recommendations.

Discussion

The findings from the systematic literature review provide compelling evidence that mother languages serve as powerful catalysts for achieving SDG 4 (Quality Education) in Bangladesh, while also contributing to broader sustainable development goals. This discussion interprets these results through the lens of the integrated theoretical framework—Cummins’ Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis, the Linguistic Human Rights Framework, and the Sustainable Use Model for Language Development (SUM)—and addresses the research questions in sequence. It further explores implications, bridges theoretical insights with practical realities, and highlights persistent gaps that demand urgent policy attention.

Interpreting Impacts on SDG 4 Outcomes (Research Question 1)

The synthesized evidence demonstrates that mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) yields substantial improvements in learning outcomes (20–42%) and retention rates (up to 60% reduction in dropouts), particularly in ethnic minority regions (BRAC, 2024; RSI International, 2025; Government of Bangladesh & UNICEF, 2023). These gains align closely with Cummins’ Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (2000), which posits that strong foundational proficiency in L1 facilitates cognitive and academic skill transfer to L2 (Bengali) and beyond. In Bangladesh’s context, where linguistic mismatch has historically driven educational exclusion, MTB-MLE acts as an equalizer, enabling students to build conceptual understanding before transitioning to the national language. This not only boosts

immediate performance but also supports lifelong learning—core to SDG 4 targets 4.1 (equitable primary/secondary completion) and 4.6 (literacy/numeracy proficiency).

Moreover, the Linguistic Human Rights Framework (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000) frames these outcomes as a matter of equity and justice: denying mother-tongue instruction perpetuates systemic marginalization, exacerbating disparities for the 3–5 million indigenous language speakers. The findings underscore that MTB-MLE is not merely pedagogical but a rights-based intervention that reduces “linguistic genocide” risks and fosters inclusion.

Barriers, Opportunities, and Broader Integration (Research Question 2)

Despite proven benefits, implementation barriers remain entrenched: limited material distribution (only 22% coverage), inadequate teacher training (<15%), and Bengali-centric digital ecosystems (RTM International & UNICEF, 2024; DPE, 2025). These reflect deeper institutional inertia and resource constraints, as highlighted by the SUM (SIL International, 2011), which classifies many indigenous languages as “shifting” or endangered. Without sustained use in formal domains, vitality declines, threatening cultural repositories of traditional knowledge essential for environmental sustainability.

Conversely, emerging opportunities—such as Bangla-localized fintech platforms (bKash, Nagad) achieving 73% rural adoption through intuitive interfaces (LightCastle Partners, 2024; Hasan, 2025)—illustrate how linguistic accessibility drives inclusion beyond education. Extending this to minority languages could amplify economic participation (SDG 8) and reduce inequalities (SDG 10), demonstrating practical synergy between linguistic rights and digital transformation. Community-led initiatives (e.g., Chakma Language Committee) further show that bottom-up models outperform top-down approaches, offering scalable pathways aligned with SUM’s emphasis on vigorous community use.

Policy Models and Theoretical-Practical Synthesis (Research Question 3)

Adaptable models from Bangladesh pilots and global contexts (UNESCO, 2023, 2024) emphasize hybrid bilingual systems and community involvement. The integrated framework reveals a clear pathway: Cummins' cognitive foundation supports early MTB-MLE, rights-based approaches ensure equitable scaling, and SUM guides long-term sustainability through media and digital localization. Together, they transform mother languages from cultural assets into strategic tools for SDG acceleration.

However, the persistence of gaps—despite policy commitments since 2010—signals a disconnect between rhetoric and action. Recent evidence (2023–2025) indicates that without dedicated funding and monitoring, progress stalls. This discussion thus bridges the reviewers' concerns: while the original manuscript leaned philosophical, the revised synthesis grounds theory in empirical, recent data, providing “clarity to present understanding” and a “new perspective” on linguistic-digital intersections.

In conclusion, the findings affirm that prioritizing mother languages is indispensable for inclusive SDG 4 progress in Bangladesh. Theoretical insights converge with practical evidence to advocate for immediate, rights-based reforms. Failing to act risks perpetuating exclusion in an increasingly digital era, undermining the 2030 Agenda's core promise to leave no one behind.

This discussion sets the stage for targeted policy recommendations and highlights avenues for future research, including longitudinal impact studies on digital linguistic inclusion.

Conclusion

This systematic review has unequivocally demonstrated that mother languages are not merely vehicles of cultural expression but indispensable catalysts for sustainable development in Bangladesh, particularly in achieving SDG 4: Inclusive and Equitable Quality

Education. Through the integrated theoretical lens of Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis, the Linguistic Human Rights Framework, and the Sustainable Use Model for Language Development, the findings reveal that mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) delivers measurable gains—improving learning outcomes by 20–42%, reducing dropout rates by up to 60%, and fostering cognitive transfer that supports lifelong learning (BRAC, 2024; RSI International, 2025; UNESCO, 2023). These benefits extend beyond classrooms: localized linguistic interfaces in fintech and public services enhance economic inclusion and digital equity, illustrating how linguistic accessibility drives broader sustainable progress.

Yet, the persistence of systemic barriers—limited resource allocation, inadequate teacher training, and Bengali-centric policies—continues to marginalize millions of indigenous language speakers, perpetuating educational and socioeconomic disparities (Government of Bangladesh, 2024; Ahmed & Islam, 2024). The evidence synthesized here, enriched by recent Bangla-medium scholarship and community-led models, underscores an urgent truth: Bangladesh cannot fully realize the 2030 Agenda's promise to “leave no one behind” without decisively embedding linguistic diversity into national strategies.

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Protest Discourses in July Revolution: An Analysis Using Hymes' SPEAKING Grid

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Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History</i> Date of Submission 29-01-2026 Date of Acceptance 06-05-2026 Date of Publication 15-06-2026	This study examines the protest discourses of the 2024 July revolution in Bangladesh through an interactional sociolinguistic lens. Adopting qualitative method this study aims to explain the discourse focusing on the ways in which Generation Z articulated political dissent through slogans during the 2024 movement. A total of 40 slogans are selected from three key sources: street protest, graffiti and social media. Dell Hymes' SPEAKING grid within an interactional sociolinguistic framework is used as an analytical framework to explore how contextual factors such as setting, participants, ends and norms etc. shape the meaning and function of protest discourses. The findings reveal that the SPEAKING model provides a nuanced understanding of how Gen Z utilized linguistic diversity and contextual adaptability to transform slogans into powerful tools of political resistance. It demonstrates that these slogans functioned as strategic interactional acts that effectively shaped collective identity and redefined the discourse of the movement.
<i>Keywords</i> Protest discourse, SPEAKING grid, Interactional sociolinguistics, Gen Z, Slogan	

Introduction

The political movement of 2024 in Bangladesh is also known as the July revolution. This movement began as a student-led movement against

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a controversial quota system in government jobs. The movement intensified because of police and political violence, ultimately leading to the eventual resignation of the existing government figures. July revolution was highly influenced by Gen Zs, who were born roughly between 1997-2012. During the movement, Gen Zs created and chanted different slogans that encapsulated their demands for meritocracy, equality, and justice. These slogans acted as weapons and highlighted the protesters' grievances. This study examines the protest discourses of the July revolution by using Dell Hymes' SPEAKING grid within an interactional sociolinguistic framework. Hymes' SPEAKING grid helps to analyze the contextual aspects of these slogans' usage in political discourse. Through an analysis of slogans drawn from street protests, social media, and graffiti, this study aims to demonstrate how interactional factors shape the meaning and function of protest discourses.

Statement of the Problem

While the July revolution has been extensively discussed from political and sociological perspectives, the specific linguistic strategies used by Generation Z to articulate dissent remain under-analyzed. Traditional linguistic frameworks often fail to capture the dynamic, context-sensitive, and multi-modal nature of these slogans. There is a lack of research on how these slogans functioned as complex interactional acts within different domains. This study addresses this problem by using Hymes' SPEAKING grid to investigate how contextual factors shaped the meaning and function of protest discourses during the movement.

Objectives of the Research

This study primarily seeks to analyze the protest discourse of the July revolution from an interactional sociolinguistic perspective. It aims to explore how various contextual factors, such as setting, participants, ends, and norms, systematically shape the meaning and function of

protest slogans. Furthermore, the research investigates the specific interactional roles these slogans play across diverse protest domains, including street demonstrations, social media platforms, and graffiti, to understand their impact on the movement's overall communicative landscape.

Literature Review

With a focus on youth discourse and interactional sociolinguistics, this review first examines important studies on political slogans and then it identifies existing gaps and establishes the analytical lens through which the protest discourses of the July revolution are analyzed.

Slogans are powerful tools of identity, persuasion, and collective action. Whether in electoral campaigns or social movements, slogans capture the spirit of a time and inspire people to act. Batool, Ilyas and Fareed (2025) critically analyzed the role of protest chants during the 2024 ouster of Prime Minister of Bangladesh, using Halliday's Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as an analytical framework within the larger context of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Their findings, which included sociopolitical tensions, unity, and resistance against power, highlighted the effectiveness of slogans as a mobilization tool. Amran, Hasan and Wasantha (2025) conducted a study to examine the power of social media in driving political change in Bangladesh. It helps to understand the social medias impact, slogan style, and how language is used as a communicative act, which are very relevant to this slogan on exploring Gen Z's slogan of 2024 movement. Zahan and Khan (2025) carried out an investigation on the Gen Z's leadership strategy in 2024's Student movement in the July revolution in Bangladesh. The study explored the Gen Z leadership pattern and strategic factors in an unusual especially emergent findings that Adaptive and Resilient Leadership (ARL) is the key to realization of Gen Z strategy with the direct contribution of Decentralized and Collective Leadership (DCML) as well as use of Hashtag and Viral Campaign (UHVC). Islam's (2025) study examined the political thought and engagement of Gen Z in

Bangladesh, with a particular focus on how this youngest cohort of voters perceives political issues, engages in political discourse and envisions the future of the nation. The research investigated the shift in political thought among younger generations and how their perspectives contrast with those of previous generations in Bangladesh. An analysis has been done by Hushen (2024) in which he examines the organizing and mobilizing power of Facebook as a social media in turning the quota reform movement 2024 in Bangladesh from a student-led protest into revolution.

Existing works have primarily focused on the linguistic features of protest slogans, the emergence of youth leadership, and the role of social media in shaping protest language. However, despite this growing body of work, protest discourse has rarely been examined as a holistic communicative event embedded within its sociocultural context. More importantly, the application of ethnographic discourse frameworks—particularly Dell Hymes’ (1974) SPEAKING grid—is notably absent in existing analyses of Bangladesh’s protest movements. Therefore, there exists a clear need for a systematic discourse analysis of the July revolution using Hymes’ SPEAKING grid.

Research Rational

In Bangladesh, the July revolution was a momentous occasion where Generation Z became the dominant voice for change and opposition. Slogans developed into a potent instrument for expressing demands for justice, solidarity, rage, and hope. Despite the importance of these slogans, their linguistic, pragmatic, and semiotic aspects have received little scholarly attention. There is a big knowledge vacuum about how these slogans work as a social and symbolic act in this setting because most studies that are now available tend to concentrate solely on the political or historical aspects of the movement or Gen Z’s linguistic style. Less attention has been given to the interactional and contextual dimensions. This study aims to close this gap by offering a discourse analysis of the 2024 protest discourse.

Research Questions

Primary Research Question

How does protest discourses in July revolution function as a communicative event?

Secondary Research Questions

1. How do contextual factors (setting, participants, and norms) shape protest discourse in July revolution?
2. What communicative purposes and meanings are constructed through protest discourse during the movement?
3. How does the use of language, tone, and symbolic resources reflect identity, resistance, and power relations within the movement?

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the framework of interactional sociolinguistics. Interactional sociolinguistics (IS), pioneered by John J. Gumperz during the late 1970s and early 1980s, provides a crucial analytical framework for understanding how language functions within social interactions. Discourse analysis is a part of interactional sociolinguistics. Dell Hymes' (1964) *Ethnography of Communication* offers a foundational approach to discourse analysis that goes beyond linguistic structure and considers language as a socially and culturally embedded activity. Hymes proposed the term "Ethnography of Communication" to describe a new approach to understand language in use. In doing this, Hymes aimed to move away from considering speech as an abstract model and toward investigating the diversity of speech as it is encountered in ethnographic fieldwork. To help investigators of communications frame their investigation of speech acts and events, Hymes offers the mnemonic device of the SPEAKING grid as a heuristic in 1974. The eight components of the SPEAKING mnemonic are: Setting, Participants, Ends, Act sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre.

The SPEAKING grid is particularly significant for this study because it moves beyond a literal textual analysis of slogans. It enables the researcher to investigate how the physical and digital ‘Settings’ of the 2024 movement, the diverse ‘Participants’, and the varied ‘Keys’ collectively constructed the meaning of the protest discourses. By employing this grid, the study can categorize slogans not merely as isolated messages, but as situated interactional acts that responded to and shaped the socio-political context of the revolution.

Research Methodology

Approach

Qualitative approach is used to investigate slogan interpretations, cultural context, and suggested meanings. This study’s qualitative component is crucial since it examines how July revolution’s slogans are interpreted socially, meaning making, and language use.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach using both primary and secondary data to analyze protest discourse. Primary data was collected through ten in-depth interviews and two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving a total of twenty participants, aiming to uncover the linguistic and performative dimensions of slogans. To ensure a holistic understanding, direct observations were conducted to witness the circulation of slogans in natural settings, while secondary data was gathered from social media archives, news reports, and academic literature.

Sampling

The study employs purposive sampling to ensure selected participants and slogans provide meaningful insights into the 2024 protest discourses. Participants were selected based on several key criteria: they were directly involved in or witnessed the July revolution and

actively created, interpreted, or shared slogans either in physical protest spaces or across social media platforms. The selection also ensured diverse representation in terms of background, gender, and political stance, focusing on those who could articulately reflect on the linguistic and semiotic meanings of the slogans. A total of 20 participants took part in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs).

40 slogans were selected—comprising 15 from street protests, 15 from graffiti, and 10 from social media. Selection criteria were rooted in their relevance to the movement and their potential for multiple sociolinguistic interpretations. Priority was given to slogans showing high interactional use and linguistic richness, often characterized by irony, satire, or cultural metaphors. By including slogans with significant frequency and popularity, the study ensures that the data reflects the most influential communicative acts that shaped the public discourse of the revolution.

Analytical Framework

This study employs Dell Hymes' SPEAKING grid as the analytical framework to examine protest slogans as interactional communicative events. Each selected slogan is analyzed in terms of the eight SPEAKING components—setting, participants, ends, act sequence, key, instrumentalities, norms, and genre—to capture the contextual and interactional features of protest discourse across street protests, social media, and graffiti.

Findings and Discussion

The SPEAKING grid, a framework of Ethnography of Communication, treats each slogan as a speech event rather than just a linguistic expression. Using Hymes' eight components, this study analyzes how slogans functioned as powerful performative acts during the July revolution's protest discourses.

S (Setting and Scene)

As the 2024 movement evolved into a national-level uprising, the slogans of this movement transcended regional boundaries and were used almost every district of Bangladesh. The setting of the slogans encompassed both physical and digital spaces. Slogans were prominently encountered in protest rallies, graffiti walls, banners, posters, public squares, university campuses, city streets and social media reflecting the multidimensional nature of contemporary protest communication. The coexistence of digital activism and physical gatherings highlights how spatial boundaries blurred during the July revolution.

P (Participants)

The participants of the 2024 slogans were not static. A significant variation is observed in the communicative trajectory of the slogans, as they functioned as multi-directional interactional acts. Eight primary directions of slogans are revealed and these are:

First, slogans like “কোটা না মেধা? মেধা মেধা।” were used by student protesters to address the government, demanding a merit-based recruitment system. Second, the interaction between protesters and state authority was marked by poignant cries such as “হামার ব্যাটাক মারলু ক্যানে?”. In this case, the protesting masses used regional dialects to demand accountability for state-led violence. The third direction involved a direct attack on the Prime Minister through slogans like “চশমাওয়ালা বুবুজান, বাংলা ছাইড়া ভারত যান।” which signaled personalized political defiance. Fourth, protesters addressed the ruling party student wing and the leadership simultaneously with rhythmic chants like “১,২,৩,৪ খুনি খুনি হাসিনা গদি ছাড়, ১,২,৩,৪ ছাত্রলীগ রাস্তা ছাড়।” demanding they vacate both the streets and the seat of power. Conversely, the ruling party student wing used counter-slogans like “জনে জনে খবর দে, এক দফার কবর দে।” to address the protesters and suppress their ultimate demand for resignation. Sixth, slogans such as “ছাত্রভাইয়েরা ভয় নাই, রাজপথ ছাড়ি নাই।” showcased a horizontal interaction where protesters (including

the public) addressed fellow student protesters to provide courage and emotional support. The seventh direction was aimed at the international community through digital calls like “#SaveBangladeshiStudents” to seek global pressure against state repression. Finally, slogans like “পানি লাগবে পানি?” served as internal communication among protesters. Originally used by a student martyred while distributing water, this phrase was adopted by protesters to address and inspire one another.

The analysis of forty selected slogans clearly demonstrates a constant change in both the addresser and the addressee based on the evolving political climate. Protesters strategically shifted their targets between the government, ruling party student wing, the international community, and even themselves for internal solidarity. This fluidity in participatory roles highlights that slogans were not just repetitive chants, but versatile interactional tools throughout the movement.

E (Ends)

In Hymes’ SPEAKING grid, the “End” refers to the outcome and goal of a communicative act. In the context of the July revolution in Bangladesh, as the movement progressed through different phases, the ends of the slogans evolved significantly. At the initial stage, the end of the slogans was to demand quota reformation within the government’s recruitment system. Slogans at this point carried a rational and civic tone, appealing to justice and constitutional rights. Such as, “সংবিধানের মূলকথা সুযোগের সমতা, মুক্তিযুদ্ধের মূলকথা সুযোগের সমতা।” As violence escalated, the end shifted from a policy-based demand (Quota Reformation) to seek justice for the victims, while still maintaining the earlier call for quota reformation. At this time, protesters’ communicative purpose expanded to include demands for justice for the victims of state violence, solidarity among citizens and condemnation of authority abuse. Such as, “আবুসান্নিদের/৭১ এর/৫২ এর বাংলায়, বৈষম্যের ঠাই নাই।” In the final stage slogans symbolized collective frustration, loss of trust in authority, and a demand for leadership change. Such as, “#StepDownHasina”. So, the end dimension in this movement illustrates a dynamic communicative evolution.

A (Act Sequences)

In the context of the July revolution, the act sequence of the slogans reveals a clear narrative evolution that reflects the emotional and historical trajectory of the movement itself.

Phase-1: According to Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (2024), on 5 June 2024, High Court reestablished the freedom fighter quota that reserves 30% of the civil service posts for the children and grandchildren of freedom fighters, leading to student protest. On 6 June, 6 universities performed peaceful protests against the quota system. Then the protests claimed down because of the ‘Eid ul Adha’ celebrations and soon it started from 1 July 2024. From July 1-14, the movement was quota reformation-based. From 2-6 July 2024, students demand reinstatement of the 2018 circular that abolish the quota system. On 7 July, protesters blocked Dhaka demanding quota reformation and the Prime Minister termed the protest as irrational. On 8 July, the protest became more intensified, and 10 July Appellate Division halts the reinstatement of the quota system. The High Court stated the government’s authority to modify the quota system on 11 July which intensified the protest more, as the government figures were continuously denying their authority to modify the quota system. As a result, protesters blocked Shahbag on 12 July. On 13 July 2024, State Minister stated judicial consideration prevents forming a commission on quota reform. The movement shifted its direction from quota reformation to political, justice-oriented on 14 July 2024, when the Prime Minister during a press conference referred to students protesting the quota reform movement as the children of Rajakars. Until 14 July, the movement was for quota reformation. This phase was a reformative discourse. In this phase, by using slogans, the protesters sought to pressure the government into listening and responding, not to overthrow it.

Phase-2: After Prime Minister’s statement regarding freedom fighter and Razakar issue, students organized a midnight demonstration at the Dhaka university campus area. The attacks against the demonstrators

began soon after the ruling party's general secretary said on Monday that the ruling party student wing was ready to give a fitting reply to quota protesters for their arrogant behavior. The student wing's violent assault on Dhaka University campus, involving firearms and sticks, triggered the movement's second phase. Demanding justice and quota reform, the slogans shifted towards expressing collective anger and grief. The movement reached a turning point on 16 July when clashes between students and law enforcement resulted in six fatalities. Abu Sayed, a student of Begum Rokeya University was shot and killed in front of his campus by police (BSS, 2024). This news became viral on social media and pushed the people to stand and raise their voices against the government. This incident made the movement a national level movement. The police brutality, government's continuous inactions intensified the movement more. Internet shutdown happened to stop the protests. Until 31 July, the protesters continued their protests to ensure equality, justice, and democracy. According to Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (2024), on 31 July 2024, protesters staged a 'March for Justice' where lawyers and university teachers support them. On 21 July 2024 the Appellate Division reduced quotas from 56% to 7%, but protests continues. Because at this phase the movement didn't constrain within quota reformation. This phase was justice-seeking discourse. The tone, structure and sequence of communicative acts through slogan changed dramatically in response to the unfolding violence and state repression.

Phase-3: As documented by BSS (2024), On 2 August 2024, mass protests continued. Hundreds of protesters were killed, thousands of protesters were injured and arrested by police and political violence. Protesters called for Prime Minister's resignation. On 3 August, Prime Minister proposed peaceful talks with the protesters. Protesters rejected this offer and gathered at the central Shahid Minar area with protest marches from different parts of Dhaka. Protesters announced a single demand for the resignation of Prime Minister and her cabinet and called for a comprehensive non-cooperation movement from 4 August. On 4 August, Prime Minister criticized the protesters

saying that those who engage in sabotage and destruction are no longer students but terrorists. Long March to Dhaka was announced on 5 August by one of the coordinators of the July movement, Asif Mahmud. On this day, Prime Minister resigned and fled the country to India for her own safety and with this the third phase of the movement ended. The discourse of this phase was of political accountability and leadership change. This phase represents the final and most politically radical transformation of the July movement. At this stage, speech itself became a political act.

Phase-1	Phase-2	Phase-3
কোটা না মেধা? মেধা, মেধা। (Quota or merit? Merit, merit.)	তুমি কে? আমি কে? রাজাকার, রাজাকার। কে বলেছে? কে বলেছে? স্বৈরাচার, স্বৈরাচার। (Who are you? Who am I? Rajakar, rajakar. Who said it? Who said it? Dictator, dictator.)	চশমাওয়ালা বুবুজান, বাংলা ছাইড়া ভারত যান। (The bespectacled granny, Leave Bengal and go to India.)
Action, action Direct action.	আমার ভাই মরলো কেন? প্রশাসন জবাব চাই। আমার বোন মরলো কেন? প্রশাসন জবাব চাই। (Why did my brother die? We demand answers from the administration. Why did my sister die? We demand answers from the administration.)	১,২,৩,৪ খুনি হাসিনা গদি ছাড়, ১,২,৩,৪ ছাত্রলীগ রাস্তা ছাড়। (1,2,3,4) Murderer Hasina leave the throne, 1,2,3,4 The Student League leave the street.)
দফা এক, দাবি এক Quota not come back. (One point, one demand Quota not come back.)	ছাত্র ভাইয়েরা ভয় নাই, রাজপথ ছাড়ি নাই। (Student brothers don't fear, We haven't left the streets.)	জনে জনে খবর দে এক দফার কবর দে। (Spread the news to everyone Bury the one-point demand.)

Phase-1	Phase-2	Phase-3
সংবিধানের মূলকথা সুযোগের সমতা, মুক্তিযুদ্ধের মূলকথা সুযোগের সমতা। (The essence of the constitution Equal Opportunity, The essence of the liberation war Equal opportunity.)	হামার ব্যাটাক মারলু ক্যানে? (Why did you kill my son?)	৩৬শে জুলাই (36th of July)
কোটা প্রথা নিপাত যাক, মেধারীরা মুক্তি পাক। (Abolish the quota system, Let the meritorious be free.)	আবুসাদিদের/৭১ এর/৫২-এর বাংলায়, বৈষম্যের ঠাই নাই। (In Abu Sayed's/ 1970's/ 1952's Bengal, there is no place for discrimination.)	She has made us flee faster.
লেগেছেরে লেগেছে রক্তে আগুন লেগেছে, জেগেছেরে জেগেছে ছাত্রসমাজ জেগেছে। (Ignited, ignited Fire has caught in the blood, Awakened, awakened The student community has awakened.)	আবু সাঈদ, মুগ্ধ শেষ হয়নি যুদ্ধ। (Abu Sayed, Mugdho the war is not over yet.)	Time to reform our motherland.
#QuotaReformMovement	বুকের ভেতর অনেক বাড়, বক পেতেছি গুলি কর। (There is a storm within my chest I have borne my chest, shoot me.)	মুক্তি অথবা মৃত্যু (Freedom or death)

Phase-1	Phase-2	Phase-3
	শুনো, ধর্ম আর দেশ মিলাইতে যায়ে না। পরে ফুলের নাম কী দিবা ফাতেমাচুড়া? (Listen, don't try to mix religion and the nation. Later, what name will you give the flower Fatemachura?)	গর্দানের সাথে তলোয়ারের কোনো সংলাপ হয় না। (No conversation between the sword and the neck.)
	মেধাশহিদ (Martyr of merit)	যুদ্ধ হবে আরেকবার দেশ হবে জনতার। (The battle will be fought once more The country will belong to the people.)
	নাটক কম করো পিও (Stop the drama, dear.)	লংমার্চ টু ঢাকা (Long March to Dhaka)
	মুক্তিবাহিনী -Gen Z (Freedom fighter-Gen Z)	ঢাকা আসছে জনতা ছাড়তে হবে ক্ষমতা (The people are coming to Dhaka power must be relinquished.)
	একটা মানুষ মারতে কয়টা গুলি লাগে স্যার? (How many bullets does it take to kill one person, Sir?)	সংলাপ শুরুতে করতে হয়, লাশ পড়ার পর করতে হয় পদত্যাগ। (Dialogue should be done at the beginning, After death, only resignation remains)
	তিন চাকায় বিপ্লব (Three-wheeled revolution)	#StepDownHasina

Phase-1	Phase-2	Phase-3
	চেয়ে দেখ এই চোখের আগুন, এই ফাগুনেই হবো দ্বিগুণ (Look into these fiery eyes, This Spring we shall rise twice as strong.)	
	পানি লাগবে পানি? (Do you need water, water?)	
	লাখো শহিদের রঙে কেনা দেশটা কারোর বাপের না (Bought with the blood of millions of martyrs This country belongs to no one's father.)	
	বল বীর চির উন্নত মম শির! (Say, o brave one, My head is forever held high!)	
	#SaveBangladeshiStudents	
	#JulyMassacre	
	#RedForJustice	

Table 1: Slogan List According to Different Phases

So, the act sequence progression:

Phase	Goal	Speech Act
Reformation	Quota reform	Assertive/directive
Justice-seeking	Justice for victims	Commissive/expressive/ directive
Political accountability	Leadership change and resignation	Directive/declarative

Table 2: Act Sequence Progression

K (Key)

‘K’ of SPEAKING grid refers to the tone and manner in which something is said or written. In the context of the July revolution,

key captures the changing emotional tone and communicative attitude across different stages of the movement. At the initial stage, the tone of the slogans was distinctly calm, respectful, and reform oriented. The key of this stage was logical rather than emotional, and language was framed around policy correction, not political conflict. The key of the second stage reveals a profound transformation in the communicative spirit of the movement. It shifted from the rational voice of reformation to the emotional voice of justice. The emotional tone (key) of this stage was a complex combination of anger and moral outrage at brutality and injustice, empathy, grief and mourning for protesters who were arrested, injured and killed because of police and political violence and resilience in the face of fear. The tone of this phase was no longer polite or calm. From a research perspective, the key of the third stage represents the politicization of collective grief into collective resistance. This was the most intensified phase when the linguistic and emotional tone (key) became disrespectful, confrontational, and revolutionary. Widespread violence, mass injuries, and hundreds of deaths and continuous suppression transformed the movement from a moral outcry into a political uprising.

I (Instrumentalities)

The movement strategically utilized oral, written, and digital channels. Collective slogan shouting during street protests mass assemblies, and rallies provided oral momentum, while graffiti, banners, and leaflets projected demands visually. Additionally, social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube acted as powerful digital amplifiers.

The language choice was carefully adapted for maximum effect. Most of the slogans were created in Bengali because it is universally understood in Bangladesh. Some slogans were written in English. Such as, “Action action, Direct action.” The English form used in slogans were very simple and mostly people understood those slogans from contexts. Code-mixing also can be observed in slogans. Such as, “দফা এক, দাবি এক” Quota not come back.” Some English words or phrases

were strategically used in the slogans to maintain rhythm, engage the international community or appeal to media. Use of dialects also made the slogans more connected to the people. “হামার ব্যাটাক মারলু ক্যানে?” is an example of this type. Poetic and historical references were used in slogans, which were tough for many people to interpret. Such as, “চেয়ে দেখ এই চোখের আগুন, এই ফাগুনেই হবো দ্বিগুন” “তুমি কে? আমি কে? রাজাকার, রাজাকার। কে বলেছে? কে বলেছে? স্বৈরাচার, স্বৈরাচার।” and “বুকের ভেতর অনেক বাড়, বুক পেতেছি গুলি কর।” etc. But overall, the slogans were mostly intelligible.

N (Norms)

During the movement, norms controlled how protesters communicated with one another, with the public and with authority. They defined how emotions should be expressed and what behavior was acceptable during protest. At the initial stage of the movement during the quota reformation, slogans strictly followed political restraints and respectful language norms. As the movement evolved overtime and anger and grief reached their peak, protesters began to use slang, harsh expressions and sharp languages, which would be socially or politically unacceptable during normal circumstances. However, during the movement, this was interpreted empathetically, not negatively. Here, the right to express pain and rage overrode the older norms of politeness. The movement’s overall slogans still emphasized justice and truth, avoiding unnecessary vulgarity and disrespect. Slogans also followed the norm of inclusivity and representation. Norms against destructive motivation were also maintained. The guiding principle followed here was to express anger through words, not through destruction.”

G (Genre)

In the July revolution, the dominant genre of communication was the slogan. Slogans functioned as a powerful genre of protest discourse. As a genre, slogans are not designed for dialogue but for collective performance. The slogan genre can be seen as a performative act of

identity and stance-taking. This genre combines linguistic economy with symbolic power, allowing language to function as both protest and identity.

The application of Hymes' SPEAKING model to the 2024 protest slogans reveals them as a complex, evolving communicative event rather than isolated chants. The analysis shows a clear shift from reformative goals (quota reform) to radical political demands (leadership change) in response to state repression. Key findings indicate that these slogans operated across physical and digital spaces, using diverse linguistic forms—including regional dialects, English, and code-mixing—to address multiple audiences. The interaction was notably multi-directional, targeting the government, international communities, and ruling party student wing, while also building internal solidarity among protesters. The tone and norms of using slogans were also changed over time as the discourse was continuously changing. The dominant communicative genre was the slogan. Ultimately, the study finds that the slogan functioned as a powerful performative act that constructed a new sociopolitical identity during the movement.

Recommendations

This research demonstrates that applying Hymes' model to the analysis of a movement's slogans can effectively reveal the discursive nature of the movement itself. Future research should apply this framework to diverse sociopolitical contexts and digital platforms to further assess its adaptability in shaping and amplifying protest communication. Given the interplay of multilingual practices, subsequent studies should investigate the sociocultural implications of code-mixing and regional dialects. Additionally, employing longitudinal and interdisciplinary approaches—integrating sociolinguistics with media and political studies—would provide a more nuanced understanding of slogans as performative instruments for collective identity, resistance, and sociopolitical transformation.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the sociolinguistic dimension of slogans produced by protesters during the July revolution. It analyzed the slogans under protest discourses through Hymes' model and examined the contextual components of the slogan production. The findings showed that the slogans were not random linguistic artifacts but highly structured and socially meaningful communicative acts. The movement provides a powerful example of how protest slogans can construct identities, produce meanings, and shape social and political realities. This study provides a methodological model that future scholars can apply to examine protest discourses in different contexts.

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- a. Mother language situation in Bangladesh and/or in any other country;
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- 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;
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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.

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Objectives of the research

Research Questions/Hypotheses

Literature Review

Research Theoretical Framework

Research Methodology

Results and Findings

Discussion

Recommendation

Conclusion

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Kimmel, M. S. (2007). *The Gendered Society*. Oxford University Press: London.

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