

# **THE CHALLENGES OF LEARNING BANGLA IN ENGLISH MEDIUM SCHOOLS OF BANGLADESH**

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A thesis submitted to Brac Institute of Languages in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Arts in TESOL

Brac Institute of Languages (BIL)  
Brac University  
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It is hereby declared that

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2. The dissertation does not contain any material that were previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The dissertation does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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## Approval

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## **Abstract**

There are three streams of education in Bangladesh, Mainstream Bangla medium, English medium and Madrasha medium (Kamol, 2009). English medium schools in Bangladesh provide a quality full and alternative private education in primary, secondary and higher secondary levels. It is a special kind of education system run by private ownership where the medium of Instruction is in English (except Bangla). These schools directly follow the British curriculum and syllabus (Haque, 2011, p. 185). Consequently, learners tend to face difficulties in terms of learning Bangla course in English medium schools. After doing an extensive literature review, very little has been found about the challenges that students face in learning the Bangla course. That means, there are very minimal research has been done on this area till now. This research project will try to explore the difficulties that learners face while learning Bangla language at English medium schools. Researcher will use both qualitative and quantitative research method in gathering data. Data will be collected from teachers' interview and through focus group discussion (FGD) with students to bring out a critical insight of the research area.

**Keywords:** Learning Bangla, challenges, language difficulties in classroom, motivation in classroom, language courses.

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# **Chapter 1:**

## **Introduction**

Bangla is our mother tongue; we inherit this language since our birth. It plays an essential role in our everyday life. Countries, where English is not the native language have seen a rapid growth of English medium instruction (EMI) at the school level and higher education (HE). Primarily driven by the notion of internationalization of HE—which Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines as the integration of an international/intercultural dimension into all the activities of a university, including teaching, research, and service functions —EMI has been perceived as a key strategy through which universities respond to the influence of globalization out of academic, political, social and economic motives. Consequently, a common language is needed to create a knowledge base in higher education as it is the highest source of gathering knowledge. So, English has become our second language considering the value attached to the language in the present time and the advantage of English in the existing global language order. It dramatically impacts development, modernity, scientific and technological advancement (Phillipson, 1992, p. 11). Over the last 30 years, the number of English medium schools has mushroomed up in Bangladesh, especially in Dhaka city (Haque & Akter, 2013) because of the demand for English around the world as well as in Bangladesh since the curriculums in higher education are in English as well as we need English in every socio-cultural aspect in present days. That means we have a good number of English medium students in our country. As mentioned earlier, these schools follow the UK based curriculum, and Bangla is the only subject taught here. Their maximum efforts go for practising the English language in school. Consequently, students of English medium schools decrease their use of Bangla (Haque, 2009). The students certainly face some difficulties in learning the language. The target of this research is to find out the Bangla learning challenges among English medium schools.

### **1.1. Background and Context:**

Bangla is an Indo Aryan language and evolved from Sanskrit. It is our mother tongue, and English is our second language. Since our birth, we start to acquire the Bangla language as (L1). Therefore, we adopt the language quickly and begin to speak it by learning from our family and various contexts. We use English as our second language. According to Kamol (2009), there are

approximately 500 English medium schools in Bangladesh. English medium schools emphasize learning English as they follow the British curriculum (Haque, 2011, p. 185). Their medium of Instruction is English, and they have only one Bangla course in the curriculum, which is not updated. So students do not feel much interested in reading Bangla. The students read imported western books written for the context of the west (Al-Quaderi, 2010). Consequently, students tend to have more control over the English language. On the other hand, the researcher found that the learners feel comfortable reading in the English language, as this is the medium of communication in their schools. Moreover, students do not show much interest in participating in extracurricular activities (ECA) in Bangla. But we all know that extracurricular activities are a great source of learning. But if they would participate in such activities, their problems would be lessened in many cases. And some top institutions have reported that due to the students' lack of interest in participating in Bangla extracurricular activities, they are forced to conduct extracurricular activities in English. Schools have also said that historical events, such as Ekushey February, Shadhinota Dibosh, and Bijoy Dibosh, are celebrated every year with great respect and admiration for our contributions and sacrifices of freedom-fighters. Deep-rooted Bengali cultural events, such as Pohela Falgun, Pohela Boishakh, are also celebrated every year to inspire them to know more about the Bangla language and culture. Yet, the English medium students face hardship to learn Bangla in school. Bangla course seems to them quite different yet challenging. This paper tends to determine what type of difficulties learners face in school while doing the Bangla course.

## **1.2 Statement of Purpose:**

The primary purpose of any language learning is to enable learners to communicate effectively or make them read, write, speak, and listen effectively. The ability to speak fluently in English has always been an ambition for a vast population in Non-English speaking countries. The students of English medium schools are mandatory to communicate throughout English in school. They are studying all English subjects (except Bangla); thus, English comes naturally to most students, both verbally and in written form. English is a compulsory subject from the primary to degree level in this country, whereas Bengali is taught in English medium school only through one subject. It is not only knowing some rules and grammar of the Bangla language in

the classroom. As per the survey, it is found that students face difficulties to do the Bangla course at English medium school. So, this research will try to bring out those learning difficulties and some probable solutions.

### **1.3 Significance and Scope:**

This research topic's relevance is that the importance of learning Bangla has become a burning issue than ever for the English medium students of Bangladesh. The fact is that primary education in the mother tongue is crucial for building a strong foundation for a child's future learning. A growing body of literature in favour of this view is further proof of it. In English-medium schools, mainly where English is the official medium of Instruction, Bangla is taught (and learned) as a subject of its own to primary-aged students rather than a mode of communication. As a result, the problem becomes multi-layered. For instance, for a seven or eight-year-old whose first language is Bangla and who is far from grasping the very basics of English, it is only natural for him/her to struggle to learn a different subject (math, science) in a language (English) that he/she barely understands. According to a research paper on the topic titled "The importance of mother tongue-based schooling for educational quality" commissioned by the Education for All Global Monitoring Report, there is a term for the learning commonplace in different education streams in the country. It's called "submersion," which essentially refers to "instruction through a language that learners do not speak ... because it is analogous to holding learners underwater without teaching them how to swim." That indicates the problem that has two-pronged: Not only does the student now have to grasp a new concept, but that too in a language other than his/her mother tongue. This is the wrong way and is a recipe for mass confusion for students because, as the paper as mentioned earlier claims, "The second or foreign language...should be taught systematically so that learners can gradually transfer skills from the familiar language to the unfamiliar one." In other words, skills and concepts that a student learns in his/her mother tongue do not need to be re-taught in the second language—they can be transferred. However, it's the technique of "submersion" that has been institutionalized in English-medium schools (hence the name "English-medium") to the extent that we don't think anything of it. And this mentality is perhaps one of the most significant underlying issues with English-medium schools in the country.

Language inherently political—and no one knows this better than the Bangladeshi people. We, out of all people, should know that education in the indigenous language is only the first step towards securing our ethnic minorities' rights in a land where their languages are under threat. The good news is that there seems to be genuine recognition of the importance of education in indigenous languages at the policy level. The bad news is that we are moving at a snail's pace, and we still have a lot of ground to cover, which, at this point, seems like an impossible future.

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

As mentioned earlier, English medium schools are mushrooming up very quickly in our country, especially in Dhaka city. All subjects are composed in English except Bangla. Students face some problems during the course. The significance of this research is to find out those problems in learning the technique and coming up with some probable solutions.



## **Chapter 2.0:**

### **Literature Review:**

Language is a powerful means of communication which has empowered us to be more evolved in comparison to other creatures so far found on the planet. It is the principal methods utilized by people to speak and communicate with each other. It is that heavenly present for us that has empowered us to appreciate the joy of being on the planet. Our identity lies in the culture we follow. Quite possibly the most impressive types of symbolization and focal component of all human culture is language. In addition, it is a piece of culture which is an arrangement of symbolic verbal and sometimes composed written representation learned inside a specific culture. Mother tongue is the language that a child learns first from the mother before joining school. It is also the language used by the majority of people in a given area or community. Choice of language medium during the early periods of schooling is a much discussed issue. Most researchers contended unequivocally for the utilization of mother tongue as the language medium as this is the language, which the kid is generally acquainted with. Consequently, when a subsequent language is presented as a language medium in the primary school years, it conflicts with the universally held thought of the mother tongue as the best language medium to start training at the primary school. Many developing nations are grappling with the issue of policy on language of instruction to be utilized in schools. Albeit English is seemingly the most broadly utilized language to the degree that it very well may be viewed as a global language, different developing countries have been discussing policy changes concerning the use of vernacular languages as the vehicle of instruction in their educational systems. In the English medium schools of Bangladesh English is used as the medium of communication despite English is not the home language of most Bangladesh students. Its main aim is to ensure that students can acquire the required proficiency in English to fulfill the needs for future employment in the global community as well as to access sophisticated knowledge.

### **2.1 Education in Bangladesh:**

Education is the key to overall development of a country. This acknowledgment exists among the post-independent government education policy makers of Bangladesh. In any case, different challenges in the education system damages achievement accomplished up to this point.

Contrasted with global level instruction in Bangladesh framework isn't serious and this has basic ramifications upon the overall national development. Lack of a unified curriculum has been the most despicable aspect of the training area for as far back as 49 years in Bangladesh. Other challenges such as the quality of teachers and facilities, issues inbuilt inside the syllabus and absence of political will to execute sensible suggestions of the different education commissions additionally have had ruinous impacts. Moreover Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. It's 168.31 million people live in 0.144 million square kilometers. It is also one of the poorest countries, with a Gross National Income of \$345.613 USD per head in 2020. In 2021 the national debt is expected to reach \$45 billion, foreign aid has already reached \$ 49.55 billion in 20/21 fiscal year.

South Asia currently hosts a significant part of the world's out-of-school children and unsurprisingly, governments in this region largely focus on raising enrolment and school completion. However, within South Asia, Bangladesh has improved its position ahead of India and the region as a whole, in female primary and secondary enrolment rates (Mahmud, Asadullah and Savoia, 2013; Asadullah, Savoia and Mahmud, 2013). Even amongst 15-19 years old, primary school completion rate of girls in Bangladesh is not only significantly higher than boys, it is also higher than that for girls in India and Pakistan (Riboud, Yevgeniya and Hong; 2015). If time spent in school creates cognitive skills, then Bangladesh's recent progress promises reasons for hope and optimism. Given that the share of girls is greater than the share of boys in both primary and secondary schooling, this might also imply a "twin gender gap" to the extent female advantage in schooling translates into an advantage in cognitive skill.

Bangladesh has seen a significant improvement in primary school participation<sup>3</sup> in the last two decades (Government of Bangladesh, 2011). Public expenditure on primary education as a percentage of total public expenditure on education has gone up to 45% (in 2010) from 37% (in 2005). According to Annual School Census (ASC) records on all government and non-government formal primary schools, gross enrolment rate is currently over 100. Under the second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP), the government undertook a wide range of supply-side initiatives that led to improved access to and greater participation in primary education. Between 2005 and 2010, gross (net) enrolment rate increased from 93.7% (87%) to 103.5% (94%). Whilst drop out still remains an issue, it is not very high amongst children who



complete primary schooling. Overall, 97.5% children who complete primary schooling upon passing the terminal examination enrol in grade 6 (Government of Bangladesh, 2011). However, this does not imply that primary school completion rate is nearing 100% in Bangladesh. The exact situation is unclear in the absence of reliable data. School participation has also increased at the secondary level. In particular, female secondary schooling has experienced significant growth in Bangladesh following introduction of the Female Secondary School Assistance Program (FSSAP) in the early 1990s. Under the program, stipends were given to girls irrespective of household wealth conditional upon enrolment in secondary school. The program has been associated with an exponential increase in female schooling, reversing the gender-gap in secondary education in less than a decade and across all income groups (Khandker, Pitt and Fuwa, 2009; Asadullah and Chaudhury, 2013). Despite these gains in school participation and access, however, the rate of completion of secondary school cycle remains low for both boys and girls. Moreover, low quality of learning remains a major pitfall that undermines any endeavour to increase enrollment.

## **2.2 English Medium Education:**

In our digital world, knowledge of a foreign language is an indispensable and fundamental ability. In a period of globalization, when the world might be viewed as a little village, learning foreign languages has become a need for people. That is where the urgency of English medium schools in Bangladesh raised and permanent investment has been made in foreign-language learning; and educational programs have been created and refreshed continually. The improvement of international communication; the success of the workforce in the worldwide region; and indicators relating to the international value of post-graduate education and educational institutions are all directly connected with foreign-language competence (Zhetpisbayeva & Shelestova, 2015). For this reason, foreign-language teaching in developed countries is one of the important components of the education system. In the education system of the Bangladesh, especially in the post independence period, important investments have been made in the learning of western languages, especially English.

In private English medium schools, all courses are taught in English using books that are produced in the UK, except for courses in Bengali, and where religious courses are offered. The core part of this sector is the small number of leading English medium schools charging high fees, which are much better resourced than public schools (Fatema, K., 2019).

Bangla is an optional subject. Even those who take it hardly achieve the competency of Grade 5 standard while finishing O levels. Because of this, and the fact that the books used in English medium schools are from the UK (Gill, 2012), most of the English-educated graduates cannot read or write in their mother tongue, though they can speak it. Similarly, though they might be good at Roman, Greek, or Chinese history, they know little of their national history (Islam, M., 2019). They tend to look down on students from Bangla medium schools. Many English medium students see themselves as only temporarily in Bangladesh, with their ultimate destination an English-speaking country. No doubt, these attitudes contribute to the global 'brain drain'.

Around this elite core of English medium schools are less exclusive schools charging a lower level of tuition fee and providing on the whole a lower quality English medium instruction. These schools, growing in number, are designed to capture the market among non-elite families for English language education. Teachers at these schools are neither required to have completed English medium schooling nor to have taken English at the tertiary level. The students do not speak English as much as their counterparts at the elite schools, though they learn to read and write reasonably well. In the later stages of schooling, from Grade 8 to A level, these students use the same texts as their elite school counterparts. They often use cheaper UK books printed in India or Indian-authored books in English in the earlier grades (Haque, 2011).

Besides, the Cadet Colleges, the military schools, recently decided to adopt English medium instruction (The Daily Janakantha, 2002). A small number of Bengali-medium schools also provide English medium shifts at low cost. In both cases, the schools follow a Bangla curriculum translated into English, rather than a British-sanctioned curriculum. The private universities also provide English Medium Instruction. This sector is growing rapidly, with the support of the government and the global funding agencies (Shahadat, F., 2016).

The elite English medium schools in Bangladesh are a powerful model, offering the most prestigious educational commodity within the private sector (Rumnaz Imam, 2005). As magnets for private investment, they are the upscale version of the World Bank and Asian Development Bank ideal of private education. The downside of this policy orientation is that while not all private schools or all English medium schools are of high educational quality, all public schools tend to be displaced downwards by forming the English language private school as modern and global. Significantly, the commodity on sale in this subsidized educational market is the English language and English culture (Mehreen, F.N., 2013). The global utility of private English medium education is one of its main attractions. Notably, global utility has been defined to exclude Bangla-formed national identity. As such, the English medium schools are in continuity with the colonial period (Thomas, 2013). The continued passage of the Bangladeshi social elite to the UK is sanctioned by the British-ordered curriculum's administration and examination. The elite receives a British education and A level certification. The mass can only aspire to the national curriculum and a nationally ordered Matriculation, with less global cachet. It is also noteworthy that recently some embassies and high commissions (e.g., American School, Australian High Commission School) have founded their schools in Bangladesh in response to the demand for 'standard' English medium schooling (Chowdhury, R. and Le Ha, P., 2008).

### **2.3 Individual Differences:**

Every student's ability cannot be precisely the same in acquiring a second language. These differences of natural learning abilities vary from person to person based on age, sex, motivation, cognitive style, learning strategies, and personality, etc. ( Meenakshi & Zafar, 2012). Teachers of language courses should be concerned and aware of these different ID's effects. Suppose the language teachers remain aware of the effects of these differences and follow any new trick for those students who are facing difficulties in language acquisition. In that case, it will be sufficient for the students (Meenakshi & Zafar, 2012).

According to Ellis, in the past, it was perceived that individual differences were influenced by the self-understanding of learners what they will accept from the second language instruction decided by aptitude battery which may forecast which learner would be successful and who

would not (Ellis, 2012). In present-day researches, the emphasis is mainly put on the explanation of why some of the learners do well in acquiring the second language and learn the language fast in comparison to other learners (Ellis, 2012, p.643). On the other hand, Horwitz mentioned that the present-day learners can be referred to "a myriad of new terms such as integratively and instrumentally motivated, anxious and comfortable, field independent and field sensitive, auditory and visual" (p. 532) Why and how the influence of individual learning differences is affecting second language learning is being less emphasized.

Every student of English medium schools is individually different and has different learning abilities. Dorneyi (2005) points out that 'enduring personal characteristics that are assumed to apply to everybody and on which people differ by degree' are considered broadly as the individual differences which are being examined by the researchers. According to Robinson (2002) and Dorneyi (2005), language aptitude, motivation, personality, anxiety, intelligence, age, learning and cognitive styles, language learning strategies are considered as core factors of individual differences.

## **Chapter: 3.0**

### **Research Methodology**

The project will follow both qualitative and quantitative research method. The researcher will collect data from both the teachers and the students through interviews and (FGD) from an English medium school located at Mirpur, Dhaka. The setting will be the vital target to bring out a real insight from the students without any manipulation. So, the (FGD) session will be done in a classroom setting. At the same time, two Bangla teachers will be interviewed to collect the data. The instructions will be given both in English and Bangla. After collecting the data, the researcher will triangulate the overall findings that are obtained from the survey. The findings will be discussed in the final paper.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

In this section, the research methodology is featured with a detailed description of all bits and pieces that will be adopted to conduct the research. To have a better understanding, the design consists of different segments. The segments begin with my research method, followed by the questions I aim to answer through my study and added some open-ended questions to both students and teachers, to make the paper more authentic. Finally, the ways of collecting data and limitations of the thesis study have been mentioned.

#### **3.2 Research Method**

The researcher will use both qualitative and quantitative research method. The study will be done through teachers' interviews and FGD with students. Four English medium schools will be selected to conduct the research. At least eight Bangla teachers will be interviewed from all four schools. A focus group discussion will be done with 20 students of different grades. The research explores the following research questions:

#### **Research Questions**

##### **General:**

- What are the challenges faced by the students while learning Bangla at English medium schools?

#### **Specific questions:**

- What is the main difficulty students face while learning the Bangla language?
- What strategies are to follow to improve the four skills in Bangla?

### **3.3 Data collection**

The data collection will take place in three different parts taking several days. Primary data will be collected from students. Secondary data will be collected from teachers. To collect the data, I will try to take permission from the authority of the English medium school. A focus group discussion (FGD) with the students will be on one or two different days according to the convenience of the participants and one day for interviewing the teachers. I will randomly interview two Bangla teachers. A group of students of class five will be asked questions. I would ask them open-ended questions which will be pre-planned, and it will help to bring out more insights of the study. A pilot study will be conducted with the colleagues, and the whole instrument will be revised according to the feedback.

The discussion and interviews which will be conducted in this study will take place in both Bangla and English, which will be audio recorded. The interview data will be transcribed and translated by the researcher herself. The researcher will create rapport with the students' researcher will assure to conceal their opinions and keep their identity confidential. The interview with the teacher will have the same pattern.

### **3.4 Instruments**

The following instruments were used to collect the data for this research:

- (a) Observation checklist
- (b) Interview questionnaire
- (c) FGD questionnaire

### **3.5 Location:**

Location is significant for any research. It helps researchers to get accurate data. I will research four reputed English medium schools located in Dhaka city. The purpose of researching an English medium school located in Dhaka city because the best schools are in this city. It will also save my time as I reside in the same city.

### **3.6 Limitations**

This will be a mini-research, and there would impose some limitations like other researches. The main limitation of the research would be time. I must finish it with a limited questionnaire for lack of time. If I could conduct some more interviews from different schools, more insights into the problem would come out that might have yielded different results.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Findings and Analysis**

#### **4.1 Introduction:**

In this chapter, the data that was gathered from the teachers and students' questionnaires, interviews, FGDs as well as the practical classes from the students and teachers of English medium institutions have been analyzed and evaluated in detail concerning the challenges of learning Bangla for English medium students who face severe problem in speaking, reading and writing Bangla during their academic and non-academic hours.

#### **4.2 Findings of the Student Survey:**

##### **4.2.1 What kind of difficulties do you find while learning Bangla:**

Around 75% of students have directly mentioned that they were directly encouraged to learn only English as their mode of communication rather than Bangla. So they always felt inclined to learn Bangla that they got in their educational ambience. 10% of students have mentioned that the teachers' presentations and lectures in Bangla classes were not as impressive as the presentation and lessons of English, maths, and sciences. Instead, in Bangla classes, teachers use conventional teaching methods while using exciting and updated teaching methods in other classes. Some senior section students indicated that the teachers involved in teaching Bangla in the English medium schools require more training before entering into the classes. The remaining 15% of the students said that there were not many extra classes for Bangla, there were not regular weekly or monthly exams for speaking, listening, writing, and reading tests for Bangla. There were not many co-curricular activities like essay writing competitions in Bangla. Many policy-related issues have made it difficult for them to learn Bangla despite Bangla as their mother tongue.

##### **4.2.2 Which type of TV programs do you find interesting, Bangla programs or English Programs:**



Almost 100% of the students have mentioned that they find English programs interesting among TV programs. As their curriculums are UK-based and their books are also imported from foreign countries, they can easily relate the TV programs with their curriculums and reading materials.

#### **4.2.3 What other sources do you use to practice the language at home:**

Apart from TV programs, students have mentioned that they read storybooks and novels to increase their understanding and speaking ability in English; they hear podcasts and audiobooks to have better-listening power. They also talk with their family and friends in English to sharpen their speaking skills. Apart from these sources, they also used youtube and Netflix for entertainment purposes and admitted that these are also important sources for learning the language and culture.

#### **4.2.4 Have you ever done any Bangla cultural program in your school? Do you like this kind of programs:**

It is scary that 70% of the students have mentioned that they have never participated in any Bangla cultural programs in their school. And among them, 30% of the students have said that they have not attended the Bangla cultural program, not as a spectator. And the rest, 40%, have participated in the programs as spectators. And 25% of the students have mentioned that they have participated in the Bangla cultural program once or twice in their school. The remaining 5% of the students said they participated in almost every Bangla cultural program in their schools. They used to enjoy such kind of programs a lot.

#### **4.2.5 Do you find your teacher's Instruction interesting in English? Why:**

This was an important question that has been asked to the students. And they have given us some crucial insights. Students have told us that their mode and communication are in English, and their curriculum is entirely UK based (Brown, 2000). Hence, they provide their highest effort for English related instructions. Students believe that their teachers use advanced techniques for their students that are student-friendly, and those resources are not available in Bangla. While

teaching, their teachers use multimedia and virtual boards, field trips, awards for motivation, advanced science labs, audio and video tutorials, stage performances and gameplay methods, etc. These techniques make their lessons more interesting, and these are absent in traditional Bangla medium schools. So there lies an embedded concept within the students that these are only implementable for English medium students.

#### **4.2.6 Is there anything you dislike about your teacher's instructions in Bangla? What are they:**

Students had the opposite reaction when we asked this question. They told us that they feel like the Bangla instruction method is not a dynamic one; instead, the Bangla instruction method follows the traditional approach. Even if they are interested in following the Bangla instruction method, they do not find additional supportive materials or resources to find for any English instructed matter. Students have identified this one as their primary obstacle in following the Bangla instruction method. Students have also said that as their communication medium is English, they do not feel comfortable with the study's Bangla instruction method. They also believe that as the Bangla language has much less international exposure than English, it will be a futile effort to rely on the Bangla instruction method for their future. And even in Bangladesh, for official purposes, we use English mostly rather than Bangla. So these factors have created a dislike for the Bangla instruction method among the English medium students.

#### **4.2.7 Does your Teacher encourage you to participate in activities using the Bangla language with your classmates:**

Students have denied that their teachers encourage them to participate in activities using the Bangla language with their classmates. They have said that their teachers encourage them to participate in Bangla language activities with their classmates only in Bangla class. Students have said that apart from English classes, in other classes like math, science, history, geography, and general knowledge, they are encouraged to participate in class activities using the English language with their classmates by their teachers.

#### **4.2.8 Do you read Bangla or English newspaper at home? Why?**

Among the students who participated in the survey, 75% of the students have reported that they read an English newspaper at their home because their teachers instructed them to do so. They said that their teachers have said that reading the newspaper is an excellent habit for the students and from the newspaper, they will learn many new facts and increase their general knowledge. And most importantly, they have emphasized that by reading an English newspaper, they can develop good English reading habits. 5% of the students said that they regularly read English newspapers for the reasons mentioned earlier. In a week 2-3 days, they also go through Bangla newspaper to develop their Bangla reading and writing skills. And the remaining 20% of the students have said that they do not read any newspaper because they are not interested in doing so or do not find enough time to read a newspaper. And some of them have also mentioned that they do not find it interesting to read a newspaper.

#### **4.2.9 Which news channel seems interesting to you for a daily update? Bangla or English:**

In terms of news channels, 100% of students rely on English news channels. 85% of the students have said that they follow the BBC news channel for any global news update. And the remaining 15% of the students have mentioned CNN as their preferred news channel. But rather than new channels, they focus more on online portals of these news agencies. And for local news students of English medium have mixed feelings. They have said that for local news, they rely on the online version of Daily Star, The Independence, Financial Express, Business Standard, etc.

#### **4.2.10 Are there any suggestions you want to give? Please add if you have any other points:**

While doing our FGD, we have learned that English medium students also want to learn Bangla, as this is our mother tongue. They think of this as their deficiency, and they have provided us with some suggestions from their end. These suggestions are:

1. English medium students require lots of motivation to learn Bangla from their educational institutions and their family. As they live in a complete English ambience, they often feel Bangla is not necessary for them.

2. The teachers involved in teaching Bangla in English medium schools require more training about handling the students because they directly deal with the students regarding Bangla learning at school.
3. Bangla teaching methods should be updated. Instead of following traditional teaching methods, teachers should blend in with modern techniques and strategies to teach students Bangla related lessons. Then the classes will be more interesting for them.
4. Additional supportive materials and supplements should be provided to the students so that they can get quick help and guideline if they are stuck in any issue or topic.
5. More Bangla related online materials should be introduced.
6. Bangla related books and stories should be updated and should be planned well. More exciting stories and poems should be added to their books.
7. Students must go through regular Bangla related weekly and monthly tests that they face for other subjects.
8. Bangla-related co-curricular activities like essay writing competitions, reading Bangla storybooks should be made mandatory for the students, and incentives should be introduced for the students too.
9. An hour daily on school period can be introduced when the students will communicate with their surroundings in Bangla as their communication language.

Students have felt that if these recommendations are considered, then the English medium students' situation will be improved.

### **4.3 Analyses of the Students' Responses:**

From the students' overall response, it is evident that English medium students' are also highly interested in learning Bangla. All they need is proper study materials and guidance from the institutions. And they also urged to have policy-related changes too so that their studies should be more effective. They have also said about introducing Bangla's versatility in its usage both in the national and international arena. Some of the students have urged about updating Bangla education techniques, and others have emphasized the supportive materials of Bangla learning.

Students have again and again emphasized creating an environment that supports Bangla learning for them. Otherwise, all other arrangements for learning Bangla will be futile.

#### **4.4 Findings of the Teacher Survey:**

##### **4.4.1 What is the proficiency level in Bangla among the students in school:**

This was the very first question of FDG to the teachers of English medium schools, and the answer was much frustrating. The teachers have said that Bangla's proficiency level among the students in their schools is much low. And they are much alarmed with this situation.

##### **4.4.2 Is there any Bangla cultural program done in school to enhance their learning:**

Teachers responded positively when this question was asked to them. They have said that historical events, such as Ekushey February, Shadhinota Dibosh, and Bijoy Dibosh, are celebrated every year with great respect and admiration for our contributions and sacrifices of freedom-fighters. Deep-rooted Bengali cultural events, such as Pohela Falgun, Pohela Boishakh, are also celebrated every year. Some teachers also mentioned that they celebrate all traditional Bengali events, such as boshonto utshob (spring festival), Pohela Boishakh (new year), pitha utshob (rice cakes), Bhasha Dibosh (language day), Rabindra and Nazrul joyonti (birth anniversary) to enhance the students' knowledge of the language and culture of Bangladesh in their schools (Begum, 2005). So this is indeed much hopeful news for us all.

##### **4.4.3 Which challenges do you face while teaching Bengali at school:**

This was yet another critical question for the teachers of English medium schools. In response, they have said that as their curriculum is based on the British curriculum, so it is natural that students are encouraged to emphasize more on English and to ensure that and also to comply with the British curriculum, the school authorities have to make English as the communication language within the school. This is the first and foremost barrier for the teachers in teaching Bangla to the English medium schools. When students stay in a complete English focused ambience, they don't feel attracted to learning Bangla. So without students' interest in Bangla, it

becomes quite a hectic job for the teachers to teach Bangla to the students of English medium schools. They have also mentioned that as the English medium students are poor in Bangla, their books should be revised, and easier topics should be introduced to their books at the elementary level. With this teacher indicated policy-related changes.

#### **4.4.4 What would be the probable solutions to overcome the teaching challenges you face:**

In response to this question, teachers have emphasized that there should be more scope to exercise Bangla in English medium schools as practise makes a man perfect. They said that authorities should be more lenient towards Bangla. They noted that Bangla is a mandatory course. But it is often treated as an optional course. This approach should be altered first (Haque, 2012). If this change comes, the rest will be following.

#### **4.4.5 Do you think students face challenges in learning Bangla? If yes, what are the challenges:**

When we asked the English medium schools' teachers this question, they replied positively to this question with a gloomy face. They said that students are also facing many challenges in learning Bangla in English medium schools. They mentioned that as their communication medium is English, so students do not get the scope to learn Bangla by talking with their classmates during school hours. Another factor is that as their curriculum is based in the UK, so, the students also do not feel interested in learning Bangla and use Bangla in their real-life scenario. Another challenge is apart from books and notes provided by the teachers; students do not find any scope to explore Bangla grammar and literature as there is an intense scarcity of resources over the internet to learn Bangla.

#### **4.4.6 What would be the probable solution to decrease the challenges that students face while learning:**

The problems are common to both ends in the English medium schools when someone deals with Bangla, whether they are teachers or students. So the solutions also need to be the same. And the problems and solutions that we have discussed are similar. So we can suggest the points mentioned earlier as the solutions to decrease the challenges students face while learning Bangla in an English medium school.

#### **4.4.7 Do you think the Bangla curriculum is perfectly designed? If Yes/ No, why:**

Both teachers and students have complained about the curriculum of Bangla and urged for restructuring. So teachers said that Bangla's curriculum for English medium students is not a perfect one, and there lies a lot of room for development. And without covering these holes, we can not resolve this issue, and we can not expect our children to study in English medium schools to be efficient in Bangla like they are efficient in English.

#### **4.4.8 What kind of changes are needed in the curriculum to make Bangla learning more effective:**

While doing FGD with the Teacher of English medium schools in response to this question, the teachers reported that the existing curriculum is not student-friendly. They said that as the students of English medium schools are weak in Bangla, their books should be more simplified and well-illustrated; their books need more exercise to do more and more practice. Additional notes and supplements should be added to the books so that their books become more resourceful. And with some policy changes, if we can add more parts of Bangla within their classwork, students will benefit significantly. The teachers urged that if these changes are made within the English medium's existing curriculum, they hope to see significant positive change and expect that English medium students will learn Bangla quite easily within their educational institution's environment.

#### **4.4.9 Which type of newspaper is kept for both Teacher and Students in school? Why:**

We know that newspapers are a great source of knowledge. So in both Bangla medium and English medium school's library, newspapers are kept for reading both for teachers and students. In English medium schools, the English version of newspapers is kept both for teachers and students. Because in an English medium school, the school authority always tries to maintain an environment that complies with the British standard (Locher, 2008). And to do so, they serve the English newspaper to both teachers and students of the school and ignore the Bangla newspaper. The school authority believes this also creates an English learning-friendly environment and motivates the students to engage more in English.

#### **4.4.10 Are there any other suggestions you want to give:**

We got some interesting insights when we ask for more suggestions from different English medium schools' teachers. They urged that parents should be more careful in teaching Bangla to their children as Bangla is our mother tongue. Teachers said that as there are many limitations for them due to curriculum and authority, they always have to stay within a line as teachers. But for a guardian, there is no boundary. A guardian can do whatever he or she feels necessary for their children. So the teachers urged the guardians to step in and asked the guardians to create some scopes for the students in their home environment to learn and enhance their Bangla related skills at their home (Mehreen, 2013). The teachers also asked the ministry of education, Bangladesh, to play a significant role in ensuring an environment within the English medium schools to create more scopes for the students to learn Bangla by understanding the respective school authority. Teachers also said that the respective school authority should also be more considerable in celebrating the national days as well as Bangali cultural days. This effort will subconsciously push the students to learn the Bangla language and culture-that is what the teachers believe in. Teachers also said that school authorities should also arrange field trips to the historical places associated with our culture and heritage semi-annually or bi-annually because practical experience always has tremendous importance than bookish knowledge. Upon implementation, teachers believe that such recommendation will work magically and motivate English medium schools to learn Bangla.

#### **4.5 Analyses of Teachers' Responses:**

From the teachers who participated in the interview sessions, it is found that the teachers of English medium schools are much concerned about the development of the students of English medium schools, and they are much interested in teaching Bangla to their students. That is why they pinpointed the students' errors and pinpointed the mistakes of themselves also. The teachers also emphasized much on the policy related alteration. The teachers who participated in the FGD said again and again that learning a language requires an environment. And the learning process must combine both conscious and subconscious approach (Hilali, 1990). And it has been proven that in learning a language, one must rely more on the subconscious approach than the conscious approach. Because we do things due to our habit means subconscious mind or approach. So



teachers urged that necessary arrangements must be made to hit the students' subconscious mind to adopt Bangla quickly. Teachers concluded by focusing that if they can awaken the students' subconscious senses, they can reach their goals of teaching their students Bangla.

#### 4.6 Findings from the Classroom Observations:

We have used a checklist for grading classroom observations. There were some findings that were observed and rated through a scale that includes completely, mostly, somewhat, a little bit, and not at all. The findings were evaluated based on these figures:

- 5 - Completely
- 4 - Mostly
- 3 - Somewhat
- 2 - Little Bit
- 1 - Not At All

In table-2, salient findings from the classroom, observation is shown according to a different theme such as the pattern of teaching, language use while giving Instruction, Instruction while treating errors and feedback, the pattern of activities, teaching methods/techniques, etc. A table with all the details is attached in appendix-C.

The details of the findings from classroom observation, measured thoroughly scaled using the checklist, are given below. We have observed the classroom and evaluated it based on five themes, which are discussed in the below paragraphs:

##### 4.6.1 Pattern of Teaching:

Pattern of Teaching					
	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	Little Bit	Not At All
The teacher started the class with a proper warm-up activity	17	3			
Teacher (T) asks an open-ended question	20				
Teacher (T) waits for an answer after elicitation	20				

Teacher (T) takes the responses positively	15	2	3		
The amount of teacher talk and student talk was appropriate	15	2	1	2	

Figure 1.0: Pattern of Teaching

The first theme was the pattern of the teaching of the instructor. In the very first point under this theme, we wanted to know whether the teacher started the class with good warm-up activity as students can not concentrate on a class upon entering the class. We had provided this survey form to 20 students, and from them, seventeen students agreed upon completely. Three students agreed upon their teacher to start their classes with warm-up activities mostly. Our second point was whether the teacher asks open-ended questions to the class and all the twenty students showed complete satisfaction by saying that their teacher asks open-ended questions to the class. All the students' response was utterly positive in this third point. At this fourth point, fifteen students have said that their class teacher response was completely positive, two students have said that their class teacher response was mostly positive. Three students' have said that their class teacher response was somewhat positive. At the response of the last point of theme one, fifteen students have said that they thought that it was completely fine. Two students have said that they thought that it was mostly fine. One student had said that she thought that it was somewhat fine. The other two students have said that they thought it was a little bit fine and rated this point with two points.

#### 4.6.2 Language Use while Giving Instruction:

Language Use while Giving Instruction					
	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	Little Bit	Not At All
The teacher used the target language in the classroom appropriately and effectively	20				
The teacher motivates the students while instructing (extrinsic or intrinsic)	12	5		3	
Use of Bangla was appropriate to student needs		14	3	3	
Students seemed to be clear		14	3	3	

about what they should be doing					
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Figure 2.0: Language Use while Giving Instruction

All the twenty students provided full five points at the first point of this theme two. They said that their teacher used the target language in the classroom appropriately and effectively. At this second point, twelve students rate with five total marks, five students rate with four total marks, three students rate with two total marks. Out of twenty students, fourteen students have said that Bangla's use was mostly appropriate and rated with four marks. Three students have rated with three marks, and the rest of the three students have rated with two marks at this point. The response to this point was the same as the previous point, and that is why the students have rated this point accordingly. So fourteen students have rated with four marks, Three students have rated with three marks, and the rest of the three students have rated with two marks.

#### 4.6.3 Instruction while Treating Errors and Feedback:

Instruction while Treating Errors and Feedback					
	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	Little Bit	Not At All
The teacher provided appropriate feedback on activities and assignment in a constructive way	15	3	2		
The teacher corrected the errors committed by learners with easy instructions	20				
The way teacher (T) corrects feedback encourages interaction (peer feedback)	15	3	2		

Figure 3.0: Instruction while Treating Errors and Feedback

Instruction while treating errors and feedback was our third theme, and we had three points within this theme. At the first point in total, fifteen of the twenty students responded by giving five marks. Three students gave three marks, and two students were not satisfied with the response and gave only two marks. All the students gave full five marks to this point by stating that the teacher corrected the learner's and students' incorrect answers. At the last point of the theme, fifteen of the twenty students responded by giving five marks. Three students gave three

marks, and two students mentioned that they were not satisfied with the teacher's feedback and gave only two marks.

#### 4.6.4 The Pattern of Activities:

The Pattern of Activities					
	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	Little Bit	Not At All
The class atmosphere was warm, open, and accepting	17	3			
The teacher used a variety of activities like group work, pair work, questioning, etc	20				
The teacher (T) discourages self-access activity for students			1	2	17
The teacher (T) makes the stronger learners answer rather than saying it himself	15		5		
The teacher (T) gives weaker students the chance to participate	12	7	1		
While the activity was going on, T goes around, inspects, and give comments.	20				
While inspecting T scaffolds by questioning in a pair or group work	20				
The teacher's (T) presentation of the material was meaningful, motivated, contextualized.			15	5	
Student participation was active and lively	18		2		
There were smooth transitions between activities	16	2	2		

Figure 4.0: The Pattern of Activities

This fourth theme had ten different points. At the first point, seventeen students rated with five points, and three students have rated with four points. At the second point, all the students have agreed completely and had given the full five points. Among the students, seventeen students thought that the teacher encouraged self-access activity for students and rated with one, two students thought that the teacher encouraged a bit self-access activity for students rated with

two, and the remaining one student rated with one mark. Fifteen students thought that the teacher was making the learners stronger and rated with the full five marks, and five students rated with three marks as they thought there were more scopes of development. This was much important question, and twelve students responded positively and had given the full five marks. Seven of the students had given four marks, and one student was not satisfied with the teacher's effort. So she had given three marks for this point. All the students complied with the point and had given full five marks to the teacher's approach. For seven-point, again, all the students had given the full five marks. The students were not satisfied with the teacher's materials and asked for the updated materials. That is why fifteen of the students had given three marks, and five of the students had given only two marks. For the case of participation, eighteen of the students thought that the session was lively and had given the full five marks, and two of the students had seen some room for development and had marked with three marks. For the last point, sixteen of the students thought that there were smooth transitions between activities, which is why they had given the full five marks. Two of the students had given four marks, and the remaining two students had given three marks as they had thought the process was not smooth enough.

#### 4.6.5 The Pattern of Activities:

Teaching Methods/Techniques					
	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	Little Bit	Not At All
There was the use of teaching techniques according to the objective of the lesson.		4	12	4	
The teaching method was relevant to materials that encouraged the students to interact		7	13		

Figure 5.0: Teaching Methods/Techniques

At the last theme of the first point, twelve of the students thought that using teaching techniques according to the lesson's objective was somewhat aligned and had rated with three marks. And four of the students found the techniques more positive and had given four marks, and the remaining four students had given only two marks. For the last point of this theme, thirteen of the students had thought that the teaching method was not relevant enough to materials that

encouraged the students to interact. They rated the teaching method with three marks, and the remaining seven students found it more relevant and had given four marks.

## **Chapter 5:**

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **5.1 Conclusion:**

Bangla is a mandatory subject in English medium schools. But it often an optional subject. So this approach must be changed. Because without changing our attitude towards Bangla, we cannot expect any change in the current scenario. Our second recommendation is to communicate with each other with Bangla. For learning a language, one must communicate through that language. Without speaking, one cannot make the language a habit. So English medium schools must ponder over this matter and should come up with some pragmatic steps to resolve this issue. Schools can fix an hour daily, where students will communicate with each other in Bangla. This will help the students to learn Bangla.

Motivation is a must when one is trying to adopt a new language as English medium schools are fully surrounded by English ambience, so institutions must take the necessary steps to motivate the students to learn Bangla. Schools can arrange more and more cultural programs on Bangla and develop and engage the students with co-curricular activities like essay writing competition, wall art competition, Bangla book fair etc. Such efforts will motivate the students a lot. And schools can also offer rewards upon completion of any tasks because an award is an excellent source of motivation.

The teachers involved in teaching Bangla must have more training because, in English medium schools, we can see weak students in Bangla. So they need additional care for their development. So continuous teachers training program (TTP) is a must from the school authority for the development of the teacher. Then we can expect that teachers will be providing up to date lessons to their students using modern educative tools. Another important factor is teachers, as well as relevant stakeholders, should work for the development of the supportive supplement so that they can make the student's journey to read and speak Bangla easier. Without doing so, we will not be able to see visible changes in this sector.

#### **5.2 Recommendation:**

The challenges of learning Bangla in English medium schools are many. But the good news is students are interested to learn Bangla a lot. From the study, we have found this. As Bangla is our mother tongue, despite being oriented in quite a different culture, they are still interested in learning Bangla. And for this, we have to take the required steps. Knowledge and theory presented above reveal that the advantages of an early beginning of second language teaching do not apply when qualified teachers and exposure to a language environment do not exist (Pasfield-Neofitou, 2012). Language skill development based on the mother language, which is also vital for cognitive development of the child, must be ensured in the primary school, especially in the early grades. With minimal contact time for learners, building the foundation of the mother tongue deserves high priority in grades 1 to 3. Such a foundation of cognitive and linguistic development is essential for effective learning of a second language as English becomes the first priority of the English medium students (Karim, 2013). Actions will be needed on teaching personnel management, learning aids and facilities, and curricular content and structure. A bilingual approach in Bangladesh with both Bangla and English recognized as important educational, business and public affairs languages can be seen as a longer-term goal. However, as an early step, at least in some educational institutions, both English and Bangla medium, endowed with adequate resources, a bi-lingual approach can be tried out. Such trials can pave the ground for more comprehensive practice of bilingualism in the education system (Luzón, 2010). The conclusions derived from what we know about child development, language learning and the realities of primary education should be the basis for considering and deciding the next steps in teaching Bangla in the English medium schools.



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## Appendix A

### Focus Group Discussion Questions for Students

- 1) What kind of difficulties do you find while learning Bangla?  
.....
- 2) Which type of TV programs do you find interesting, Bangla programs or English Programs?  
.....
- 3) What other sources do you use to practice the language at home?  
.....
- 4) Have you ever done any Bangla cultural program in your school? Do you like this kind of programs?  
.....
- 5) Do you find your teacher's instruction interesting in English? why?  
.....
- 6) Is there anything you dislike about your teacher's instructions in Bangla? What are they?  
.....
- 7) Does your teacher encourage you to participate in activities using Bangla language with your class mates?  
.....
- 8) Do you read Bangla or English newspaper at home? Why?  
.....
- 9) Which news channel seems interesting to you for daily update? Bangla or English?  
.....
- 10) Are there any suggestions you want to give? Please add if you have any other points.  
.....

## **Appendix B**

### **Focus group discussion with teachers**

1. What is the proficiency level in Bangla among the students in school?
2. Is there any Bangla cultural program done in school to enhance their learning?
3. Which challenges do you face while teaching Bengali at school?
4. What would be the probable solutions to overcome the teaching challenges you face?
5. Do you think students face challenges in learning Bangla? If yes, what are the challenges?
6. What would be the probable solution to decrease the challenges that students face while learning?
7. Do you think the Bangla curriculum is perfectly designed? If Yes/ No, why?
8. What kind of changes are needed in curriculum to make Bangla learning more effective?
9. Which type of newspaper is kept for both Teacher and Students in school? why?
10. Are there any other suggestions you want to give?

## Appendix C

### OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

#### Checklist for SUBJECT Observation at English Medium School

Observation no.	
School	
Date:	Time: Class started: _ _ Ended
Observer	
Name of the Teacher and background	
Topic of the lesson	

#### CHECK LIST

PATTERN OF TEACHING					
	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	little bit	Not at all
The teacher started the class with proper warm up activity					
Teacher (T) asks open ended question					
Teacher (T) waits for an answer after elicitation					
Teacher (T) takes the responses positively					
The amount of teacher talk and student talk was appropriate					
Comments: (Specific comments please)					
LANGUAGE USE WHILE GIVING INSTRUCTION					
	Completely	Mostly	Somewhat	little bit	Not at all
The teacher used the target-language in the classroom appropriately and effectively					
Teacher motivates the students while instructing (extrinsic or intrinsic)					

Use of Bangla was appropriate to student needs					
Students seemed to be clear about what they should be doing					
Comments:					

<b>INSTRUCTION WHILE TREATING ERRORS AND FEEDBACK</b>					
	<b>Completely</b>	<b>Mostly</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>little bit</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
The T provided appropriate feedback on activities and assignment in a constructive way					
The T corrected the errors committed by learners with easy instructions					
The way Teacher (T) corrects feedback encourages interaction (peer feedback)					
Comments:					

<b>PATTERN OF ACTIVITIES</b>					
	<b>Completely</b>	<b>Mostly</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>little bit</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
The class atmosphere was warm, open and accepting					
The teacher used a variety of activities like group work, pair work, questioning, etc					
The Teacher (T) discourages self-access activity for students					
The Teacher (T) makes the stronger learners answer rather than saying it herself					
The Teacher (T) gives weaker students chance to participate					
While activity was going on T goes around, inspects and give comments.					

While inspecting T scaffolds by questioning in a pair or group work					
Teacher's (T) presentation of material was meaningful, motivated, contextualized.					
Student participation was active and lively					
There were smooth transitions between activities					
Comments:					

<b>TEACHING METHODS/TECHNIQUES</b>					
	<b>Completely</b>	<b>Mostly</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>little bit</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
There was use of teaching techniques according to the objective of the lesson.					
Teaching method was relevant with materials which encouraged the students to interact					
Comments:					

<b>Summarizing Comments: (Key findings):</b>
<b>Overall Comments:</b>