

Systematic Lexical Variation's role in Cultural Identity: A Variationist Sociolinguistic Approach

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English

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Declaration

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Abstract

This paper discusses the lexical variation in Barishal dialect of Bangla with the aim of establishing the most commonly used lexical substitutions and how such variation depicts the culture and regional identity. The study has been developed based on variationist sociolinguistics to answer two important questions: First, the research identifies the most frequent lexical replacements in the dialect speech of Barishal. Second, the research explores the ways these variations can serve as culture-regional identity markers. Thus, a theoretical framework allows the study to explore the systematic relationship between language variation and social variables and its reflection of speakers' identity in a particular speech community. The information was gathered by means of semi-structured interviews and naturally occurring conversations with speakers of various age groups that belong to the Barishal speech community. The authentic use of language outside the interview environment was also recorded through the use of an observation checklist. The gathered data were transcribed in a systematic manner and analyzed using a mixed methods approach. According to the findings, the lexical substitution in Barishal dialect is not random. It is systematic and patterned. There is high consistency in high-frequency verbs and context-free expressions. Moreover, a large number of lexical items are directly related to the local culture, such as food habits, environmental factors, and social relations, which are the experiences of the community in action. This research also shows that these variations become significant indicators of identity, which strengthen social solidarity and cultural continuity. Sociolinguistic awareness is displayed through speakers when they vary their dialect and standard forms based on the situation. Although the standard Bangla is getting more exposure in the areas of education and media, the Barishal dialect is still linguistically powerful and socially significant. In general, the paper underscores the importance of dialectal variation as a component of linguistic diversity and locality. Finally, this

research contributes to our understanding of sociolinguistics, language documentation, and the status of regional dialects in Bangladesh in education and cultural heritage.

Keywords: Lexical substitution, Barishal dialect, Bangla, Sociolinguistics, Variationist approach, Cultural identity.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Language is not a homogenous system, on the contrary, there are several varieties of language in accordance with the region, social organization, cultural activity, and historical evolution. In the community of Bangla speakers, the dialects relevant to the region are important in terms of showing the local identity, social affiliation, and cultural persistence. Even though Standard Bangla is used as the prevailing form of language in education, administration, and mass media, the regional dialects still play a central role in the day-to-day communication in various areas of Bangladesh. The Barishal dialect is one of the regional forms that is a living and local language spoken by the residents of the Barishal region. It is distinguished by phonological, lexical and syntactic characteristics which are eminent to distinguish it with Standard Bangla. Although the phonological variation of the Bangla dialects has been given some scholarly interest (Rahman, 2012; Karmaker, 2019; Rahman et al., 2024), the lexical variation especially common lexical substitution in the natural language is under-researched (Chowdhury, 2013; Dunn, 2021). A lexical substitution is a replacement of standard words and forms with alternative ones. Such replacements are not deviations in local dialects as they are systematic linguistic decisions within the norms within a community. The lexical patterns usually have a social connotation, which may be identity, intimacy, solidarity and group membership. Thus, the analysis of lexical substitution in the Barishal dialect can give an understanding of not only the linguistic structure but also the sociocultural processes of the speech community. In Bangladesh nowadays, as people are becoming more exposed to Standard Bangla through education, media, migration, and electronic

communications, the issue of dialect preservation and diversity becomes especially significant. Regardless of these forces, regional dialects are still actively used in the informal world. The combination of standard and regional forms leads to the dynamic linguistic setting in which language mixing and language choice under the influence of context is rather common among speakers. It is against this background that this study examines common lexical replacement in the Barishal dialect with regard to the patterns, social conditioning, and its contribution to identity formation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Though lexical substitution as a phenomenon is quite prominent in the everyday communication of people living in various regions of Bangladesh, the studies on this issue that are systematic in nature are still not numerous. The available body of literature has placed an emphasis on the phonological variation or a general classification of dialects, neglecting the systematic fact of the variation in lexical expression as a part of spontaneous speech. With reference to Barishal dialect, the difference in empirical studies that have recorded the prevalence of lexical items that vary with Standard Bangla and how they operate in social interaction is quite visible (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Rahman, 2012; Tanvir, 2025). Moreover, no adequate research has been conducted on whether such lexical replacements are consistent across contexts or whether such replacements depend on social variables like formality, interpersonal relationship and communicative setting. The patterns of lexical substitution cannot be studied in a detail without performing a thorough analysis of lexical substitution in Barishal dialect, which is crucial in order to comprehend the sociolinguistic vitality of the dialect in developing the linguistic identity of the speakers. Thus, the given research

aims to fill this gap by offering a systematic and context-based analysis of common lexical substitution in the Barishal dialect.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main aim of the study is to represent a systematic examination of common lexical replacement in the Barishal dialect as well as an evaluation of the linguistic and sociocultural meanings of the term. To be more specific, the research attempts to determine the most common lexical replacements employed by the speakers of the Barishal dialect in the real-world conversation situations and the study intends to focus on the differences between these variations and their Standard Bangla counterparts. By doing so, the study aims at establishing whether these substitutions have patterns, and whether they reveal structural consistency between speakers. Besides recording these forms of lexical variation, the study found out more about the underlying sociocultural implications that are inherent in dialectal variation. It focuses on the way the lexical choices serve as the indicators of the regional belonging, the experience of the shared culture and identity. With the assistance of linking linguistic information to social interpretation, the research is aimed at demonstrating that lexical variation is not just superficial linguistic difference but a substantial part of cultural expression and social interaction among Barishal speech community.

1.4 Research Questions

There are two guiding research questions in this thesis: First, what are the most common types of lexical substitutions in the Barishal dialect? This question aims to determine some of the recurring lexical items not found in Standard Bangla and how they are frequent, distributed, and used in a context in spontaneous speech. It concentrates on recording tangible linguistic testimony and

defining whether those replacements are systematical or not. Second, what is the cultural or regional identity of these lexical differences? This question transcends the structural description to explore the social meaning of the use of dialect. It explores how dialectal speakers can use dialectal lexical forms to mark belonging, solidarity, the upholding of local traditions and the preservation of culture. These two research questions are the key pillars of the research as they interconnect linguistic analysis and sociocultural interpretation.

1.5 Thesis Statement

This study contends that the kind of lexical exchanges that occur most often in the Barishal dialect are systematic and structurally uniform, and that these distinctions are particularly effective as cultural and regionally identifying markers. Through the preservation of unique lexical expressions in the daily communication, the speakers of the Barishal dialect are actively engaged in creating and maintaining the social belonging, solidarity and culture continuity. This continuity of such repeated replacements shows that dialectal variation is not accidental or transitional, but rather a permanent and significant linguistic practice, which is part of the social life of the Barishal community. Therefore, this paper shows that the most common lexical replacement patterns in the speech of the Barishal dialect are systematic and structurally steady patterns, which serve as effective indicators of cultural continuity, social cohesion, and regionality.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The importance of the given study is in the fact that it contributes to the study of linguistic and sociocultural issues. Linguistically, the study empirically records the common patterns of lexical substitutions in Barishal dialect using natural dialects of speech. As a lot of the previous studies

on the dialects of Bangla language have focused on the phonological difference, the current study expands the analytical framework by shedding light on the lexical difference as the main and organized aspect of dialectal difference. In sociocultural terms, the research highlights the concept that dialect is a significant representation of who I am, and where I belong. In making known how the choice of lexicon indicates cultural affiliation and regional pride, this study overturns the notion that regional dialects are informal or inferior versions of the standard language. It instead introduces the Barishal dialect as an organized and purposeful linguistic system with a social value and cultural importance. More so, the results could have implications on language education and language policy discussion. The identification of the validity and orderliness of the dialect variation can perhaps promote more accommodating attitudes to the specific regional speech forms at both academic and institutional levels.

1.7 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This paper is specifically calculated on the common lexical replacement in the Barishal dialect in subjects of natural conversations. The study is not trying to give a full phonological, morphological or syntactic account of the dialect made and neither is it trying to compare all the regional varieties of Bangla. Rather, it is more concerned with the definition and sociolinguistic meaning of high-frequency lexical replacements. The statistics are based on a chosen population of interviewees in the Barishal area and thus, the results are confined to the speech patterns used in the sample. Although the study does not purport to explain all possible variations in the dialect, it provides a narrow and comprehensive analysis of frequent lexical patterns which represent larger community patterns.

1.8 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters, all of which lead to the general purpose of investigating the lexical substitution and its sociocultural connotation. Chapter One provides the background of the study, defines the research problem, indicates the objectives and research questions, and provides the importance and scope of the research. Chapter Two provides a literature search on the available research and theoretical foundations concerning dialect variation, lexical substitution, and sociolinguistic identity. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology that includes a description of the selection of the participants, data collection procedures, and analytical methods. The fourth chapter is an extensive discussion of the most common lexical replacements that were found in the data. Chapter Five talks about the presentations of these lexical differences as cultural and regional identities in the Barishal speech community. Lastly, the sixth chapter ends the research with a summation of the key findings, contribution, and future research direction.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is a review of the literature that is currently available concerning the research of the lexical variation and cultural identity of the Barishal dialect of Bangladesh. It discusses the theoretical and empirical origins of sociolinguistics and dialectology, and more specifically phonological and lexical variation, language convergence and identity formation in the Bangladeshi linguistic environment. The review combines both older and newer literature, which explains how the variationist approach (Labov, 1966; Labov, 1972; Trudgill, 1983; Tagliamonte, 2006) can be used to analyze local dialects and how the current literature (Ahmed, 2016; Haque, 2016; Khan, 2017; Rahman et al., 2024; Tanvir, 2025) can make the same predictions about Bangladesh. The discussion points out the interplay between lexical replacement, the regional identity, and the processes of constant sociolinguistic alteration of urban centers in Bangladesh like Dhaka and Barishal.

2.2 Theoretical Approach: Sociolinguistic and Variationist Approaches

Dialectal variation is studied using the sociolinguistic theory and specifically the variationist hypothesis of Labov (1966, 1972). Labov focused on one of the most important aspects of language variation and social stratification, showing that language change is the socially conditioned process. His studies in New York City were the basis of his future research, which investigated the effects of class, age, gender, and ethnicity on the choice of language. Trudgill (1983) furthered this argument by focusing on the importance of the social and geographical factors in the differentiation

of dialects. Trudgill states that dialects portray multidimensional social identities which are negotiated in the process of interaction within particular communities.

Tagliamonte (2006) also developed further on the variationist methodology by defining methods of quantitative studies of linguistic change and variation. This framework facilitates the study of the lexical substitution patterns, since it enables one to make systematic comparisons of the use of language in social contexts. Fishman (1972) brought in a sociological element where he described language as a coding of social behavior and group identity. His domain of language use concept highlights how specific lexical options fit specific social functions hence giving some foundation on understanding Barishal lexical substitutions as a marker of regional identity. Within the sociocultural linguistic approach, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) pointed out to the fact that, the identity is a co-construction of interaction and not simply manifested in language forms. Their theory puts emphasis on the way speakers use phonological and lexical variation to mark cultural affiliations and social affiliations. This observation is especially applicable to the case of the Bangladeshi dialects, in which the speech types of the locals tend to be used as the source of cultural identity and anti-linguistic homogenization. Although these traditions of theory overlap in their belief in the social patterned variation of language, they differ in their explanation of the mutual dependence of the form and identity of language. Labov (1972) and Trudgill (1983) concentrate more on systematic relationships between linguistic variables and social categories (class, age, and geography) and view variation as a relatively stable expression of social structure. Contrastingly, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) change the direction to the interactional processes, claiming that identity is not only projected but built through the use of language in certain situations. On the same note, Fishman (1972) also focuses on functional areas of language application, although he is less

specific on micro level selection of lexicon. Tagliamonte (2006) however fills this gap by providing a methodological approach to investigating variation in a quantitative way but her methodology still primarily focuses on distributional patterns rather than processes of making meaning. Combined, these works concur that there is a systematic variation, though they are yet to be resolved on whether lexical and dialectal selections should be viewed as a social structure, an interactional performance, or a mixture of the two. This ambiguity is especially pertinent in the context of dialects like Barishal Bangla, where the lexical substitution can serve as both a stable system and context-specific resource of identity.

2.3 Dialectal and Sociolinguistic Identity

Dialectal variation is used as a major identifiable sociolinguistic characteristic. The linguistic variation theory put forward by Labov (1972) was the first theory that established that people make socially-conscious changes to their speech unconsciously. This idea is echoed in multilingual, multidialectal societies such as Bangladesh where regional dialects co-exist with Standard Bangla. According to Trudgill (1983) and Tagliamonte (2006), dialect variation is a social phenomenon as well as a cognitive phenomenon: on the one hand, it will codify the affiliations of speakers, on the other hand, it will indicate the current linguistic development.

In Bizzon, Degaetano-Ortlieb, and Fankhauser (2020), the lexical and grammatical variation can determine how linguistic change can be calculated over a long period of time, and how the wider cultural and intellectual changes are reflected in language. On the same note, Yu (2024) used variationist sociolinguistics to explain the acquisition of the second language, and found variation to reflect, as well as influence the process of learning and adaptation. The dialect speakers of

Bangladesh tend to move among local and standard varieties depending on the situation, which implies not only the social flexibility but also shows the willingness to belong to broader linguistic networks (Begum, 2015; Khan, 2017).

The sociocultural approach developed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) also implies that identity is a continuous process of negotiation that is mediated by means of language. Lexical peculiarities of the speech in Barishal, in that case, including region-based vocabulary and idioms are the performance acts of identity that reestablish cultural citizenship. The new Dhaka accent is linked with urban prestige as Haque (2016) observed, and some rural or regional speakers might adjust their speech to fit the new image, thus causing a problem in maintaining the local dialects. In these views, it is common that dialectal variation is both socially meaningful and patterned, but there is a theoretical divergence in the way that this meaning is generated. Labov (1972) and Trudgill (1983) are more concerned with variation as a kind of expression of the social structure, in which identity is based on the fixed relationships between linguistic manifestations and social classes. By comparison, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) emphasize that identity is an ongoing process of construction in interaction and that speakers have an agentive role in the choice of linguistic resources. Tagliamonte (2006) offers empirical means of quantifying variation but is less concerned with interpretive questions of identity formation, whereas Bizzoni et al. (2020) and Yu (2024) further the discussion by demonstrating that variation also relates with the broader processes of cognitive development and language learning. Yet, these models fail to provide a complete answer as to whether dialectal characteristics can be discussed as merely unconscious manifestations of social affiliation or intentional strategies of identity acting. This ambiguity is especially pronounced in the case of multilingualism such as that in Bangladesh, where a speaker

of such a variety as Barishal dialect often switches between local and standard varieties according to the situation, and structural variation and identity-motivated variation are hard to distinguish categorically.

2.4 Lexical and Phonological Variation in Bangladeshi context

Linguistic diversity in Bangladesh is astounding in terms of geographical diversity. Rahman (2012) also gave a summary of this variation with phonological, morphological and lexical differences being identified between the dialects of Chittagonian, Sylheti, Mymensingh and Barishal. Ahmed (2016) analyzed phonologically the Mymensingh dialect and registered the distinctive sound patterns that are very distinct compared to the Standard Bangla. His results highlight the role of regional accent and word choices in carrying on historical linguistic attributes as they evolve to fit new forces.

Karmaker (2019) examined dialectical and phonemic differences in sounding in the Bangla language and found out that in the case of vowel and consonant changes, there is a close relationship with geographic isolation and social elements. These phonemic differences give a ground to the lexical diversity, because of sound change, very often lexical substitution or semantic drift occur. In the Chittagonian case, Hoque (2016) considered the possibility of classifying the variety as a dialect or semi-language and this case study demonstrates how social identity and linguistic difference interact in disputes over classification.

Rahman et al. (2024) discussed phonological variation and linguistic diversity between the different dialects of Bangladesh and emphasized the sociolinguistic importance of the sound

patterns. Their research found out regional speech forms to be the storehouses of collective memory and culture. In the same manner, Hossain (2020) wrote about what can be done to revitalize the regional dialects as the lack of them poses a threat to the pluralistic cultural identity of Bangladesh. Another study focused on the cultural significance of maintaining linguistic heritage by presenting regional dialects by Chowdhury (2013), who also described the problem of erosion of the local forms of expression with the growing urbanization and language convergence. The paper has pointed out that Chittagonian has major phonological, lexical, and syntactic differences with Standard Bangla not only as an outcome of historical divergence but also as a source of regional identity. The results point out that regional speech in Bangladesh such as Barishal and Chittagonian varieties do not disappear, they retain their own specific lexical stock and even patterns in pronunciation, even though the standard or urbanized Bangla is becoming more dominant. The analysis by Hoque highlights that the features of language are sociocultural symbols and strengthen community membership and ancestry, and offers a comparative context of explanations of lexical replacements in other regional dialects like Barishal.

Although the literature overall recognizes that the dialectal variation in Bangladesh is multidimensional, there is an implicit unequal treatment of the various levels of variation. The majority of the research (e.g., Ahmed, 2016; Karmaker, 2019; Rahman et al., 2024) focuses on phonological and phonetic variation, regarding the lexical variation as the byproduct of sound change and not the system of meanings. Contrastingly, other works like Chowdhury (2013) and Rahman (2012) mention the lexical variation briefly, but they do not analyze the lexical substitutions systematically and how they operate in daily conversation and identity formation. Moreover, despite Hoque (2016) pointing out the interplay between linguistic difference and social

identity in the Chittagonian instance, similar detailed lexical study of Barishal dialect is, however, not present. Consequently, there is an obvious gap in the comprehension of whether the cases of lexical replacements in regional forms such as Barishal represent the stable structural aspects, context-related decisions or the changing identifiers of cultural identity. This absence of dedicated lexical research leaves an unresolved tension between the dialects as phonologically-based systems and the socially-significant lexical repertoires.

2.5 Barishal Dialect: Phonological Substitution

The dialect of Barishal that is used in southern Bangladesh is characterized by phonological and lexical peculiarities. Ahmed (2016) and Rahman (2012) reported that the Barishal speech has certain softening of consonant clusters and vowel lengthening, which is the distinctive feature of Barishal speech in comparison with Standard Bangla. The phonemic analysis of Karmaker (2019) revealed that the speakers of Barishal often use retroflex forms and regional types of intonation. Lexically, the dialect still has a number of archaic Bangla words, and the local borrowings, which add to the particular regional taste. Lexical substitution is the use of a different lexical item instead of a lexical item. Lexical substitution is also very noticeable in the Barishal speech. To take an example, everyday words in Standard Bangla that describe common things or deeds tend to be substituted by local specific ones. These replacements are not accidental, they have cultural and emotional undertones which are associated with the life of the countryside, social stratification and historical progression. Tanvir (2025) indicates that this is evidenced by lexical convergence between the two speakers in Dhaka and Barishal, which is a sign of a persistent change to a shared urban form. Nevertheless, the speakers of Barishal retain some lexical units to identify with the local identity and do not want to be assimilated fully. Similar findings are also supported by the

empirical studies that show that younger speakers in Barishal are more likely to use the Standard Bangla lexemes in official situations and dialectal phrases in informal communication (Haque, 2016; Khan, 2017). This duality implies a diglossic tendency, which is conditioned by social mobility and media exposure. The lexical inventory of the dialect, then, is a matter of accommodation and opposition, that is, a compromise between local authenticity and urban prestige. This absence of agreement also indicates a general limitation in methodology of the studies of the dialects of Bangla, in which the variation in lexicon tends to be characterized, not quantified.

Although the phonological aspects have been reported to be in a comparatively stable state of dialect markers (Karmaker, 2019; Rahman, 2012), the lexical replacement in the regional dialects, e.g., the Barishal, has not been analyzed with the same level of quantitative or discourse-based analysis. The extent to which Barishal lexical substitutions are, therefore, stable, community-wide norms or context-sensitive stylistic choices, which can vary between speakers, generations, and communicative areas, is not quite understood. Moreover, there is little differentiation between lexical retention as a result of cultural heritage and lexical variation as a result of situational adaptations, a factor that restricts a complete picture of how identity is coded linguistically in day-to-day speech. The importance of this gap is particularly pronounced since the lexical items, unlike phonological features, are more directly connected to the cultural practices, and thus they play an essential part in explaining how the regional identity is linguistically preserved or changed within modern speech communities in Barishal.

2.6 Lexical Substitution: The systematic replacement of canonical lexical items with locally preferred variants in lexical substitution can be linked to phonological, semantic and sociocultural factors. In variationist sociolinguistics, lexical variation is not considered arbitrary but rather systematic, influenced by social variables (such as identity, context, and group membership) (Labov, 1972; Tagliamonte, 2006). Research like Dunn (2021) shows that lexical variation is a powerful indicator of regional identity, especially in casual speech, where speakers draw on regionally relevant vocabulary. Likewise, Bizzoni et al., (2020) demonstrate that lexical developments are linked to cultural and intellectual shifts, suggesting that vocabulary choices are socialized.

In Bangladesh, however, most research has focused on phonological variation (Ahmed, 2016; Karmaker, 2019; Rahman et al., 2024), and little is known about lexical substitution. Although Rahman (2012) mentions regional lexical variations and Chowdhury (2013) highlights the cultural importance of dialectal words, there is relatively little analysis of how particular lexical substitutions operate in everyday discourse. Furthermore, while researchers agree that lexical variation has cultural significance, less is understood about how reliably these lexical substitutions function as markers of identity. This lack of consensus underlines the need for targeted research on the prevalence and sociocultural importance of lexical substitution, especially in dialects like Barishal where local vocabulary is key to community identity. More importantly, the current literature is inclined to consider lexical substitution as a secondary phenomenon of the more comprehensive phonological or morphological change but not as a system with its own internal regularities.

Although both Labov (1972) and Tagliamonte (2006) determine that variation is socially organized, their empirical interest is still predominantly on phonological variables, with lexical patterns still under-theorized. Conversely, other researchers like Dunn (2021) and Bizzon et al. (2020) highlight the embeddedness of lexical choice in social and cultural contexts, but lack community-focused studies in South Asian or Bangladeshi settings. Consequently, it leaves a big gap in the analysis whether the lexical replacement in regional dialects such as Barishal are put in place by stable community norms or they vary based on situational, stylistic and generational aspects. This difference is specifically significant since lexical items are more directly related to lived experience, cultural practice and performance of identity than phonological variation, and thus are instrumental in explaining how regional identity is linguistically reproduced in vernacular interaction.

2.7 Urban Influence and Convergence of language in Bangladesh

A trend that has stood out in urban Bangladesh has been language convergence, the process of making dialects and languages closer to each other. Haque (2016) followed the development of a standard Dhaka accent by suggesting that the exposure to mass media and inter-regional migration have enabled urban speech norms to spread. Khan (2017) expanded on this discussion, citing social, economic, and educational outcomes as the causes of language convergence in cities. His results show that linguistic homogenization is not only a linguistic phenomenon but also a socio-cultural process, which is connected with the process of modernization and national identity. The lexical and phonological domains proved to be the most evident in Tanvir's (2025) study of Dhaka and Barishal speakers, as a result, convergence is observed. He noted that lexical changes tend to adopt urban prestige varieties, which is due to the aspiration of speakers to climb socially and be

socially accepted. This is in line with the argument made by Fishman (1972) on the point that linguistic decisions will be used as a means of negotiating power relations and membership in the group in the society. Begum (2015) also talked of a language change that is gradually occurring in Bangladesh, where speakers switch to standard or urban dialects so that they can use it to gain access to socioeconomic benefits. Nevertheless, convergence does not mean total eradication of the language. Hossain (2020) says that regional dialects still exist due to cultural support, oral traditions and family changes. This convergence and conservation simultaneously give way to a dynamic equilibrium in the ecology of linguistic in Bangladesh. The Barishal dialect is both accommodative and opposed to urbanization.

Nonetheless, the more thorough analysis of these works shows that there is no agreement when it comes to the linguistic implications of convergence at the lexical level. Whereas Haque (2016), Khan (2017), and Tanvir (2025) believe that homogenization should be increased due to the types of urban prestige, Begum (2015) and Hossain (2020) indicate that regional dialects still exist with a persistent support of culture and domain-specific use. The uncharted area of this debate is the influence of convergence on the pattern of lexical substitution in particular in regional varieties like Barishal. In most studies convergence is considered a general phonological or stylistic change, and no distinction is made on whether the core lexical items are being replaced, stabilized or selectively retained. Consequently, it remains uncertain as to whether or not Barishal speakers are undergoing real lexical replacement through the influence of urbanization or they are having functional code selection in the various areas of communication. The lack of a definitive solution to this question points to the fact that more in-depth, lexical-level studies of convergence processes in the dialects of Bangladesh are necessary.

2.8 Cultural Identity and Linguistic Representation

Cultural identity is negotiated and expressed through language, which is an important medium. The model of identity construction by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) focuses on the performative character of linguistic choices, which means that speakers are engaged in a continuous process of the formation of social meanings by using language. The dialects like those of Barishal in the Bangladeshi setting are both a reflection of regional values, sense of humor and interaction that separate regional groups of people in the face of homogenizing pressures of national standardization. Chowdhury (2013) and Hossain (2020) emphasized the idea that linguistic diversity is a part of cultural heritage. The linguistic peculiarities of the Barishal dialect are the manifestation of linguistic otherness, and the heritage of the whole community. As examples, agricultural practices, rural metaphors, and localized vocabulary are encoded in idiomatic expressions, rural metaphors and local socio-religious practices of the southern part of Bangladesh. In this argument, Labov (1972) presented a linguistic variation as a sign of social identity, and Trudgill (1983) regarded dialects as a demarcation of social membership. These theories describe the reason why the Barishal speakers are able to retain unique types of lexical patterns in spite of the exposure to standard varieties. However, although these two theoretical perspectives are a collective explanation of why language variation is associated with identity, they vary in the way the relationship is operationalized. Variation is mainly a structured expression of social categories as stressed by Labov (1972) and Trudgill (1983), and identity is viewed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) as a performance carried out by means of linguistic practice. What is less well defined in these strategies is how the particular lexical replacements, and not the larger stylistic difference, are used as markers of identity in the daily exchange. This distinction is especially applicable in the context of Barishal because it remains unclear whether repeated lexical selections (e.g.,

regional pronouns, culturally embedded food words, and stylistic intensifiers) are consistent identity signs or context-related stylistic assets.

Furthermore, the current literature is inclined to discuss dialectal features as the symbolic means of cultural representation, yet offers little empirical clarification of the way these lexical forms are chosen, preserved or transferred to other social spheres. This shows the necessity of finer-grained approach to lexical choice as a constructive mechanism of identity formation and not an overall consequence of dialect variation. In that regard, lexical substitution can be seen as a cultural act, using a word instead of another implies the commitment to the local values of the community and local pride. Dunn (2021) identified the same tendencies in English dialects: in particular, lexical diversity index's regional identity even in standardized language settings. In addition, the survival of the dialectal attributes plays a symbolic role in fighting against cultural homogenization. As noted by Rahman et al., (2024), dialectal variation in Bangladesh is the means of language diversification and cultural pluralism. This is consistent with the general linguistic tendencies in the world that focus on the preservation of the endangered dialects as intangible cultural heritage.

2.9 Research gaps and relevance of the current research

Although phonological and sociolinguistic variation in Bangladesh was covered in many studies (Ahmed, 2016; Haque, 2016; Karmaker, 2019; Khan, 2017; Rahman, 2012), systematic analysis of patterns of lexical substitution in the Barishal dialect is conspicuously lacking. The literature as a whole is preoccupied with either phonetics or grammar, which has resulted in little study given to lexical phenomena. Also, there are few studies that have discussed the role of these lexical differences as cultural or regional indicators in the language convergence situation. Tanvir (2025)

started the topic of convergence between Dhaka and Barishal speakers but focused on the phonological features mainly, in comparison with lexical semantics. In the same vein, Rahman et al. (2024) were able to give some useful phonological data, just they did not directly examine the issue of lexical substitution and its cultural meaning. Therefore, the current paper bridges this gap since it targets specifically the frequency and sociocultural significance of lexical replacements in the speech of Barishal. But more than merely pointing out the absence of lexical studies, it is also in the literature that questions about the role of lexical substitution in more general processes of dialect maintenance and change are not yet answered. Specifically, it is not clear whether Barishal lexical variants are community-wide, stable systems or that they are resources that vary based on context and the extent to which they have been exposed to Standard Bangla. Moreover, convergence studies like Tanvir (2025) do recognize interaction with Dhaka and Barishal varieties, but they do not indicate whether core lexical items are impacted or whether it is only peripheral vocabulary. This establishes a conceptual and empirical lacuna in the knowledge of whether it is lexical substitution that is a leading or secondary signal of dialect change. This question is essential to address since it is directly linked to micro-level lexical options and macro-level issues of maintaining identity, language change and regional uniqueness in Bangladeshi sociolinguistic ecology. Moreover, a multidimensional interpretation of dialectal change should be made possible through the combination of the classical sociolinguistic theory (Fishman, 1972; Labov, 1966; Trudgill, 1983) and the case studies of Bangladeshi dialects. This method reduces the linguistic differences at a micro-level of cultural identity to macro-level, which is a comprehensive explanation of how local dialects bring about national linguistic diversity. The results of the research are useful to the field of academic studies as well as language policy formulation because

they will highlight the importance of dialect maintenance in preserving the cultural diversity of Bangladesh.

2.10 Conclusion

The chapter has examined both, theoretical and empirical literature of the lexical substitution and cultural identity in the Barishal dialect. It followed the development of sociolinguistic and variationist theories and related them to the Bangladeshi linguistic realities. The review identified the need to do more research on lexical substitution even though phonological and phonemic variation have been extensively investigated, as one cannot comprehend the identity and convergence processes without further research on lexical substitution. The theoretical framework behind the analyses of the identity construction and reflection using language was the works of Bucholtz and Hall (2005), Labov (1972), and Trudgill (1983). The interplay between urban and local lingo norms and the local dialect showed dynamism and was confirmed in empirical studies in Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2016; Haque, 2016; Karmaker, 2019; Khan, 2017; Rahman, 2012; Rahman et al., 2024; Tanvir, 2025). Combined, these results highlight the fact that lexical variation is simultaneously a linguistic and cultural phenomenon, or one that summarizes conflicts of modernization and tradition, convergence and diversity. Thus, the given research, which dwells upon the most common replacements in the speech of Barishal dialect, as well as their manifestation of the regional identity, will contribute to the sociolinguistics study and the linguistic heritage maintenance in Bangladesh significantly. In addition to showing that the current sociolinguistic models can be applied to the data at hand, this review proves that the lexical substitution in Barishal is under-theorized and empirically under-studied relative to phonological variation.

More to the point, the literature is yet to offer a clear definition of how the choice of lexicon works as both a stable and context-specific identity marker within one dialect community. The current study, with its particular interest in Barishal lexical substitution, supersedes descriptive explanations of dialect variation and adds more narrow perspective on how day-to-day lexical decisions are involved in the process of building regional identity and preserving linguistic boundaries in an environment of growing standardization. This places lexical variation not as a marginal aspect of linguistics, but as a key process by which social meaning, cultural continuity and dialectal resilience are negotiated in the context of Bangladeshi sociolinguistic environments.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The chapter gives a detailed pattern of methodological layout applied in investigating the lexical substitutions in the Barishal dialect and their sociocultural implications. Two main questions that guide the research are as follows: First, what are the most common lexical substitutions in the Barishal dialect speech relative to Standard Bangla speech and second, in what ways do these variations indicate the culture or regional identity of Barishal speakers? To comprehend the lexical variation in a regional dialect, both linguistic documentation and the social interpretation of culture are needed. Thus, the proposed study follows a qualitative dominant approach that integrates quantitative methods to determine and quantify the lexical frequency of the elements and qualitative approaches to the interpretation of the social meaning of the latter forms of language.

The framework of the methodology is structured under the previously established sociolinguistic theories. The variationist model of Labov (1972) offers a basis on which linguistic forms that vary in systematic ways across communities are examined. The theory of the dialect contacts and social variation by Trudgill (1983) provides some input on the development of speech forms during the interaction and accommodation. The article by Fishman (1972) on language and cultural identity provides a conceptual basis of understanding the underlying cultural significance of lexical decisions. Additionally, the sociocultural linguistic approach of Bucholtz and Hall (2005) highlights the fact that the identification is co-constructed in everyday interaction and, therefore, it is especially applicable in the analysis of dialect-based identity performance. The perspectives

on Holmes (2013) and Meyerhoff (2018) used to form the general sociolinguistic orientation of the study so that both language characteristics and social situations received equal attention.

3.2 Research Design

The study follows a qualitative analysis method with the help of quantitative method. It helps to embrace both the structural patterns of lexical substitution and the sociocultural meanings the dialectal forms may have. The quantitative-descriptive part is designed to identify, categorize and quantify lexical substitutions in a systematically manner. Linguistic variables are considered as quantifiable factors that are measurable and can be compared between speakers and contextual variables in accordance with the principles of Labov (1972). The argument by Trudgill (1983) about dialect contact proves that visible forms of language are the manifestations of the social interaction pattern. The frequency-based methodology framework by Tagliamonte (2006) also helps the systematic enumeration and description of the lexical items, and by doing this, the conclusions which are made concerning the common usage should be made on the basis of the empirical evidence and not on the basis of the impressions. The qualitative-interpretive aspect is depth-giving as it looks at the ways in which the speakers make sense of give value and use these lexical items in their social existence. The ideas about language presented by Fishman (1972) as a symbolic resource used to create identity allow discussing the question of why some dialects are not disappearing even with the growing contact with Standard Bangla. According to Bucholtz and Hall (2005), identity is performed rather than fixed as languages are used to depict belonging, familiarity, and membership of community and, therefore, their approach is appropriate to study how Barishal speakers identify themselves using certain patterns of lexical patterns. Through the

amalgamation of these techniques, the research develops a balanced and holistic framework, which explains the language behavior as well as the cultural forces that causing the dialects to be used.

3.3 Participants

There were 15 native speakers of Barishal dialect who were involved in this study. The purposive type of sampling was used to provide diversity in demographic categories including age, gender, education level and rural-urban background. The sample of this research was selected systematically in order to have a diversified selection and manageable sample. This was based on the design of the sample according to key social groups that are relevant to the dialect variation instead of overloading it with demographical variables at random.

Table 3.3.1: Structured Sample Distribution (15 participants):

Residence	Age Group	Male	Female	Total
Rural	60-70	2	2	4
Rural	18-30	2	1	3
Semi urban (Educated)	40-50	2	2	4
Semi urban (Educated)	18-30	2	2	4
Total		8	7	15

Practically, the residence and age were taken as the principal balancing variables and education was taken as the supporting variables, though not absolute quotas in the analysis. The time spent in the Barishal area was at least ten years in a row, which guaranteed the long-term exposure and

constant usage of the dialect. The sampling method is in line with Labov (1972) beliefs that linguistic variation has to be studied in the light of a socially diverse sample to grasp how various groups of people use language differently. The respondents were selected using a purposive sampling approach in an attempt to establish systematic diversity. These were divided initially in an equal number of the residential background (rural and semi-urban) and within each of the two backgrounds, the study was balanced in terms of age (18-30, 40-50, and 60-70) and gender. The supporting variables were education and was not be strictly controlled with quota with the aim of controlling them to enable the sample manageable.

The use of occupations like fishing, teaching, homemaking, business, and agriculture as part of the participants enabled the study to take notice of the possibility of a lexical substitution differing based on the lifestyle or profession. Similarly, the sample had both older speakers 40+ and younger speakers (18-30), which served to address the possibility of generational changes in dialects usage. This variety leads to more sophisticated and representative interpretation of the lexical variation that exists in the Barishal speech community.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

This research involved two main data collection methods: spontaneous speech and semi-structured interviews, both of which play a unique yet complementary role in achieving the research goals. The first method was the recording of spontaneous speech samples, which was designed to collect naturalistic speech data in communicative contexts. The data were gathered from informal social settings (i.e., tea stalls, kitchen and family courtyards) in which participants interacted with each other. Participants provided 20-35 minutes of spontaneous speech and it took

about 5 to 8.75 hours in total. This phase was explicitly designed to capture the use of dialect as it occurs naturally, without researcher prompting, to represent the Barishal speech community's natural language use. To maintain ecological authenticity, the recordings were done in comfortable environments, such as the participants' houses and community spaces. Participants were not asked formal questions, rather, they were encouraged to freely talk to family members, friends or the researcher in a casual way. Where interaction was sparse, participants were encouraged to talk about common experiences such as cooking, events in the community or stories of rural life. This strategy reduced the effects of the observer's paradox by giving participants time to get used to the recording equipment before data collection started. The researcher remained unobtrusive and refrained from interrupting or correcting participants' speech during recordings. This approach is in line with Milroy and Gordon (2003) who stress the need for naturalistic speech as a better predictor of linguistic usage, compared to other types of speech such as elicited speech or formal speech.

The other method, semi-structured interviews, was used to answer the second question. This approach provided participants the opportunity to voice their opinions, while allowing the researcher to steer discussions towards the research themes of language use, identity and culture. These interviews were structured with pre-determined but open-ended thematic segments such as day-to-day life and family background, food practices, workplace, and informal and formal language use. The interviews were 20-30 minutes long, and were recorded with permission from participants and it took almost 5 to 7.5 hours in total. This approach had two goals: first, to collect controlled but flexible lexical data for identifying patterns of lexical substitution, second, to gain an understanding of speakers' views of dialect use, identity representation and sociocultural

meanings associated with lexical choices. Interviewed participants were asked to discuss their dialect and Standard Bangla use in different situations, connecting language use with identity. The use of both methods increased the validity and reliability of the research findings through a combination of spontaneous speech and conversational data. Although spontaneous speech recordings were more relevant to the first research question (see above), semi-structured interviews were beneficial to the interpretive and identity-driven analysis in the second research question.

3.5 Research Tool Development

The data collection and analysis were systematically, reliably, and academically rigorously collected and analyzed, so some research instruments were thoroughly designed and developed before the fieldwork. The tools were expected to provide consistency among the participants and proper recording of natural speech as well as to aid in systematic lexical analysis and respond to the research questions of the study. These tools were semi structured interview guide, observation checklist to capture natural records, a final standardized form of transcription and a lexical coding sheet. Every instrument had a specific but interrelated purpose in the research. Semi-structured interview guide was designed so as to induce spontaneity speech but topic-oriented speech with the participants. The guide was included open-ended and context-based questions that will concern daily life, family relations, local customs, childhood recollection, cultural activities, and local experiences. These themes were carefully chosen to promote natural occurrence of the Barishal dialect especially in contexts that were informal and emotive in nature where dialectal versions of words were most likely to be present. Though the interview took a guiding format to ensure that a comparison was made among participants, flexibility ensured so as to enable follow ups and expansion of the conversation. The fact that this format was flexible enables the participants to

talk freely, which allowed the researcher to record genuine lexical variation and investigate deeply into how language is culturally embedded within its participants. Some sample questions were: 1. What is your commonly used language in your daily conversations? 2. When do you talk dialect? 3. Do you believe dialect to be a part of your identity? 4. Are there special words of your part? 5. Do you have different speech patterns to your friends or family members? How? 6. Do you have any local terms when referring to food or cooking? 7. Do you change language when you are at school or in the office? In what way? On the other hand, the observation checklist was also prepared to facilitate the gathering of the natural conversational data outside the interview environment. The major points of the Checklist were: 1. Setting of interaction (e.g., home, market, social gathering), 2. Kind of participants (age, gender), 3. Lexical substitutions frequency and type of lexical substitutions, 4. Discussion subject (e.g., food, daily activities, local events), 5. Code-switching or style-shifting. 6. Employment of culturally specific or regionally marked terms. The checklist was carried out during the recorded natural conversations between the participants. The categories that were enlisted in the checklist are the setting of interaction (place of interaction, outdoors meeting, casual meeting), relationship between speakers (family, friends, neighbors), discussion topic, formality, and code-switching or influence of standard language. Such observed observations were useful in contextualizing the substitutions in lexis and enabled the researcher to make sense of variation in the social context. The systematic documentation of situational factors made the study to analyze the lexical items not in isolation but in the context of communications. However, transcription was done in the orthographic form of the Bangla script with lexical forms of dialects as they were naturally occurring. Transcription format was in the form of speaker identification codes, turn number and time marker where needed. Such non-verbal aspects as pauses, laughter, emphasis, or overlap were recorded where it is meaningful. Notably, dialects

were not standardized to Standard Bangla in the process of transcription, rather they remained as they were pronounced as they were in order to ensure authenticity of the data. This universal format made sure that there was uniformity in transcripts and that there was easy lexical extraction. The lexical coding sheet was served as the main analytical tool that was used in structuring and recording the lexical substitutions. All the dialectal lexical items identified after transcription was placed into this coding sheet in a systematic manner. Each of the entries was contained some specific elements: (1) the dialectal lexical form presented in the transcript, (2) the Standard Bangla counterpart, (3) the lexical category (pronoun, verb, noun, function word), (4) frequency of occurrence, (5) context of usage (informal conversation, narrative, emotional expression, cultural reference) and (6) information about the speaker (age group, type of interaction). This was a structured documentation, which provided quantitative frequency tracking and qualitative contextual analysis. Space was also provided in the coding sheet to take notes on analysis so that specific patterns, recurring themes, or sociocultural observations, which were associated with particular lexical items, could be made. In such a systematic arrangement of lexical information, the research study was transparent, replicable, and methodologically sound. These research tools combined form a combined framework to collect and analyze data. To sum up, semi-structured interview guide produced similar but spontaneous speech, observation checklist situated language within a context, transcription format maintained linguistic integrity and the lexical coding sheet brought about rigorous documentation and analysis. This multi-instrument methodology ensured the power of reliability and validity of the research and served a direct purpose in investigating common lexical replacements and their manifestation of cultural and regional identity in the Barishal dialect.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Analysis of Lexical Substitutions (RQ1)

In order to answer the first research question, all audio records of interviews and speeches were transcribed by means of the transcription symbols developed by (Jefferson, 2004) to provide accuracy and consistency. All the recordings were initially transcribed orthographically in Bangla. Transcription was done as a simplified form of Jefferson (2004), which involved the marking of speakers as S1, S2, and S3, selective marking of pauses and emphasis and retention of repetitions where appropriate to the meaning. Notably, none of the Standard Bangla corrections was made to maintain the originality of the dialectal forms. The lexical items that were dialect specific (e.g., *koira*, *hoise*, *mogo*, *monura*) were retained in their original form during the transcription process. Lexical items were discovered after the transcription and sorted under two labels Standard Bangla forms and the Barishal dialect equivalents. Lexical items were recognized by manual coding process where all transcripts were read several times to find words that could not be found as the equivalents in Standard Bangla. A lexical item that was found to have a dialectal form that was always used in place of a Standard Bangla form, but where the referential meaning was the same, was regarded as a substitution. The identified items were cross-checked across transcripts to verify that the identified item did not happen in a single instance but was a recurring pattern. The quantitative analysis was based on the principle of defining linguistic variables and identifying the frequency of their occurrence among speakers as elaborated by Labov (1972). Frequency was determined by the number of times a particular lexical variant appears in the transcripts. The frequencies of repeated occurrence of the same lexical item by the same speaker were treated as distinct tokens since the intention was to assess actual frequency of use and not type frequency. These numbers were then summed up by the speakers in order to be able to see the patterns of

distribution and consistency. The framework offered by Trudgill (1983) also contributed to the explanation of lexical variation being influenced by the regional contact, social organization, and contact with the community. The purpose of the analysis was to find out not only the most common substitutions but also to see how such forms differed by the demographic groups (age or location). Once the entire orthographic version of the conversations transcribed was made, the transcripts was revised thoroughly to see the lexical substitutions that kept being used that were not similar to those in Standard Bangla. All of the lexical items identified was extracted and initially made up to a corpus list. This initial list was in turn compared in all the transcripts of the participants to find out the frequency, consistency, and contextual distribution. To be explicit and analytically rigorous, the extracted lexical items was classified as per lexical class, e.g., pronouns, verbs, nouns and function words. This categorization enabled the research to establish whether some categories of lexicon demonstrate better stability or more variability than other categories of lexicon. The Standard Bangla counterpart of each lexical item was shown and the dialectal form, so that comparative study becomes easy. Such comparisons were tabled in order to ensure that these comparisons were transparent and easy to interpret. All tables contained columns representing (1) the dialectal form, (2) the Standard Bangla form, (3) lexical category, (4) frequency of occurrence and (5) contextual illustrations of the transcripts.

In addition, the tabular presentation was supplemented with qualitative analysis. The transcripts were provided with the contextual excerpts that was illustrate how the lexical substitutions in the natural conversational contexts function. Such passages assisted in showing how the usage of specific lexical elements was linked to informality, emotional outlay and unity, and culturally subtextual issues. With this mixed method, the study was able to ensure that the lexical items were

not only recorded systematically, but also understood in terms of its sociocultural functions. Such combination approach guaranteed that the analysis was not only linguistically systematic but at the same time sociolinguistically meaningful as direct answered to the key research questions of the study, which were common occurrences of lexical substitutions and the representation of cultural and regional identity. The systematic and repeatable analysis was necessary in order to draw conclusions based on the data which was done by this structured, frequency-based approach.

3.6.2 Analysis of Cultural and Regional Significance (RQ2)

Thematic qualitative analysis was needed in the second research question. Transcripts were analyzed to establish common themes which associated the use of lexical terms with cultural practices, identity as a community, and as a region. 1. The thematic analysis was inductive as the transcripts were manually coded to uncover the same semantic and cultural patterns and the codes were arranged by using Microsoft Word and Excel sheets. The open coding was originally used to identify culturally significant lexical entries (e.g., food, agriculture, religion, social relations), which were then categorized into a more general theme (e.g., cultural practices, expression of identity, belonging to community). The analysis of words related to religious life, festivals, etc. was performed to determine how the language manifests the local cultural life. The second research question relates to the interrelation of the lexical variation and cultural or regional identity. The semi structured question was answered mainly by using the data of the interviews, during which the participants was discussed on the topic of their language habits and perceptions. The contexts were interpreted based on the theme which determined patterns of identity and cultural meaning. These themes were interpreted strongly based on the view by Fishman (1972) that language is a symbol of the collective identity. The meaning was based on the frequency of thematic events as well as the contextualization of lexical elements in conversations thus making sure that the

identity-related meanings were not based on isolated occurrences but on the real evidence of discourse. In this approach, lexical items were not just denoting meaning but they indicate belonging to a social group. The sociocultural theory offered by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) shed more light on how people do their identity by using their daily linguistic selections. The fact they focused on identity as emergent, interactional and contextual enabled a more profound insight into why dialectal forms are still used by Barishal speakers despite having Standard Bangla alternatives. These observations indicate the interdependence of language, lifestyle and cultural transformation.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The ethics were observed during the research. The study had a clear objective and process, and all the participants were made aware of them as well as, the goal of the study, and written consent was obtained prior to the commencing of the data collection process. Participants were handled under pseudonyms to ensure protection and all the digital records and transcriptions and files were stored safely. The raw data was only accessed by authorized research personnel. These were some measures that helped the study to comply with ethical requirements of confidentiality, privacy, and respect towards the participants.

3.8 Necessity of Both Interviews and Natural Speech

The combination of semi-structured interviews and natural-record offers a more detailed image of the use of dialects. Interviews enable the researcher to investigate identity, attitudes and cultural meaning, whereas natural speech recordings can help to note how the speaker actually uses dialect in his/her everyday life without any prompting. The unity of the two approaches enhanced the

validity of the study since the findings was supported by the two types of evidence. The respondents were selected using a purposive sampling in an attempt to establish systematic diversity. The sample was initially be separated in equal measures to the residential background (rural and semi-urban) and within each of the two backgrounds the study was balanced on age (18-30 and 40-60) and gender. The supporting variables was education and occupation and they were not strictly controlled with quota in order to make the sample manageable.

3.9 Limitations

In as much as the study offers a very elaborate information on the lexical variation in the Barishal dialect, it has a limitation in its relatively small sample size which might not be a complete reflection of the linguistic diversity of the whole region. Moreover, more exposure to Standard Bangla in school, TV, and mobile phone communication could also have affected lexical decisions by introducing the hybrid forms or decreasing the frequency of the use of traditional dialect words. The dialect words may not be properly identified with the presence of hybrid forms. Nevertheless, the methodological approach chosen was useful and adequate, it was led to the meaningful results that was useful in the comprehension of both linguistic and cultural factors of the Barishal dialect.

3.10 Conclusion

The methodological framework that has been developed in this chapter includes a more developed and in-depth formulated approach to the structural and sociocultural aspect of dialectal variation. Combining quantitative and qualitative methods enabled the study to examine both how the substitutions of lexicon take place and why it has a cultural meaning. This methodology offered an extensive avenue to the study of language variation regarding identity and community

belonging, and it was based on the works by Labov (1972), Trudgill (1983), Fishman (1972), Tagliamonte (2006), and Bucholtz and Hall (2005). Collectively, the techniques helped to ensure the findings represented not only the quantifiable patterns, but also the lived cultural meaning of the Barishal dialect.

Chapter 4

Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter includes an in-depth discussion of common lexical replacement in the Barishal dialect on the basis of recorded collections. The recordings entail casual conversation about life in the countryside and identity, a cooking-based interaction with Hilsa fish , and another cooking-based interaction with pumpkin and beef . In the manner of the variationist sociolinguistic approach to William Labov (1966, 1972), lexical variables were found by contrasting Barishal forms with their Standard Bangla counterparts, based on the principles of methodology as developed by Sali A. Tagliamonte (2006). The sociocultural identity framework of Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall (2005) and dialect contact theory of Peter Trudgill (1983) help to inform the interpretation of findings. The discussion shows that lexical substitution in the Barishal dialect is not the deviation of randomness or performance.

4.2 Pronoun and Possessive Lexical Substitution

Lexical substitution is a structural stable and most common part that takes place in pronouns and possessive forms.

Table 4.1: Pronoun and Possessive Substitution Patterns

Standard Bangla	Barishal form and Frequency	Meaning/ Gloss	Example from Data
Amader	Mogo (High)	Our/ Ours	Mogo elakai
Amra	Mora (High)	We	Mora dekhamu
Tomader	Tomago (High)	Your/ Yours	Tomago barta
Tar	Her (Medium)	Your/ Yours	Her karone
Tomake	Tomare (Low)	You	Tomare ghuraiya
Tomra	Monura (High)	You/ Yours	O monura.
Vaire	Bhaiji/ Vaidi (Low)	Brother	R e vaidi

Replacement of Standard Bangla pronouns with Barishal ones is very consistent in all the recordings. *Mogo*, *moraa* and *her* are forms that come out easily in normal conversation. Notably, these replacements do not only take place in particular lexical settings but also are found in the narrative, instructional and evaluative discourse. Pronouns are fundamental grammatical units and their dialect stability implies the existence of a strong linguistic identity. Fishman (1972) argues that a high level of in-group solidarity is demonstrated in the use of pronouns in intimate areas. The usage of the same word *mogo* rather than *aamaader* indexes were an expression of said belonging and community identification. Moreover, according to the claims of Bucholtz and Hall (2005), identity is made in terms of interactional linguistic decisions. Pronoun change in this data

serves as an indexical signature of the regional belonging. In semi-performative situations, speakers do not level in using pronouns, which shows that they resist leveling.

4.3 Verb-Based Lexical Substitution

Table 4.2: Verb Substitution Patterns

Standard Bangla	Barishal form and Frequency	Meaning/Gloss	System of Substitution	Example from Data
Kora	Koira (High)	Do	Diphthongization (/o/) > (/oi/) + vowel insertion	Koira khamu
Jawa	Jaiya (High)	Go	Diphthongization (/a/) > (/ai/) + glid insertion (/y/)	Jaiya dimu
Khawa	Khaiya (High)	Eat	Diphthongization (/a/) > (/ai/) + vowel extension	Khamu Monura
Dewa	Deche (High)	Give	Changing of consonant (/w/) > (/ch/) + morphological simplification	Heare deche
Bosa	Boiya (High)	Sit	Diphthongization (/o/) > (/oi/) + glid insertion (/y/)	Boiya porlam

Hoyeche	Hoiche (High)	Has/ Have happened	Vowel contraction (o+ye > oi) + consonant simplification (/y/ loss)	Randa hoiche
Rekhe	Thuite (Low, used in context.)	keep	Fully lexical replacement	Horai diya Dhaikka thuite hobe
Dheke	Dhaikka rakaha (low, context-based)	Cover	Consonant gemination (/kk/) + vowel shift	Ehon horai diya dhaikka thuite hobe
Bola	Kouwa (High)	Say	Diphthongization (/o/) > (/ou/) + vowel expansion	Ki kow
Bolchi	Koitachi (High)	Am saying	Fully lexical replacement + progressive suffix variation (-tachi)	Taito koitachi

The morphological restructuring and lexical replacement are manifested in the verb replacements. The change of *kora* to *koira*, *khaabo* to *khaamu*, and *hyeche* to *hoiche* is the evidence that is systematically vowel changing and diphthongization tendencies of the south dialects of Bangla. Such forms are common and are used in procedural discourse particularly in recipes. Indicatively,

the repetitive pattern of *dimu*, *dechi*, *hoiche* is an indication of stable grammaticalization of the dialect. Labov (1972) stresses that the grammatical variation is socially ordered and meaningful. In this sample the verb replacement is not influenced by topic movement meaning that dialect grammar is not lost when conversational areas are involved. As Rahman (2012) and Rahman et al. (2024) observe, the morpho-phonological patterns in the south of Bangladesh are old. Existence of *hoiche* as opposed to *hyyeche* is in agreement with that observation.

4.4 Lexical Substitution in Rural and Cultural Vocabulary

Table 4.3: Cultural and Environmental Lexical Substitution

Standard Bangla	Barishal form	Meaning/Gloss	Example from Data	Semantic Domain
Vorbela	Beinnekale	Early morning	Oida, ki beinnekale, urandar modhye gol meetingta ki?	Time reference
Adda	Asor	Informal gathering	Oneke bier kale jai, dokane jaiya boshe, golpo kore.	Social gathering
Khub	Osthir	Very	Colourda osthir, ammu!”	Intensifier
Ekhon	Ehon	Now	Ehon mou jaibo.	Temporal marker

Dhone pata	Dhoinna pata	Coriander leaves	Kuchano peyaj, kachamrich, peyaj ar morich halka vaza hoise, ekhono dimu peyaj bata, rosun bata, jira bata, holuder guri, moricher guri, nun.	Cooking ingredient
Borboti	Borhudi	Yardlong beans	Aijto borhudi dia hol mach moja koira khamu kolam Monura.	Vegetable
Kumra	Kodu	Pumpkin	Ei kodu ta katmu.	Vegetable
Shol Mach	Hol Mach	Snakehead fish	Borhudi dia hol mach aij moja koira khamu kolam Monura.	Fish
Chingri Mach	Chingur Mach	Prawn	Chingur mach-er bhorta korle onek valo lage.	Fish
Torkarir Jhol	Mou	Gravy	Ehon mou jaibo	Gravy
Dhakna	Hora	Lid	Dhuinna pata dia uthai thuite hoibe.	Object

Uthan	Uranda	Yard	Maiyarao onek somoy uthane boiya golpo kore.	Yard
Sheddho	Hejde	Boil	Gorur gost to hijjaye geche, ekhono kodu hetar parni, harajol dia ditechi.	Boil
Kuchano peyaj	Khusainna peyaj	Chopped Onion	Kuchano peyaj, kachamrich, peyaj ar morch halka vaza hoise, ekhono dimu peyaj bata.	Chopped onion
Jhimiye jabe	Jhuimma jaibe	Will feel sleepy	Khaonda pore jhuimma jaibe Monura.	Will feel sleepy
Lokma dei	Nela dei	Take a bite	Ek ekta nela dao.	Take a bite
Chibano	Chaban daw	Chewing	Abbu, tumi matha ta ekta chaban dao.	Chewing
Ranna	Rainda	Cooking	Amra randon suru dimu.	Cooking
Idur	Undur	Rat	Indure Khaiche koddur	Animal
Ajke	Ajgo	Today	Ajgo randon Kemon hoiche	Time

Patterns of substitution of cultural vocabulary are greatly dependent on the ecology and way of life. *Borrhutti*, *kodu* and *hol maach* are examples of culturally enshrined objects. Even semi-public speech does not substitute these lexical items with standard ones. Holmes (2013) states that commonly, vocabulary variation is an indication of shared social practices. Cooking, fishing, and agriculture are the main activities of the rural setting of Barishal, so the lexical inventory inherently mirrors the practice. There is semantic extension in the common use of *osthir* as an intensifier (meaning excellent or very good). This is in line with Dunn (2021) who elaborates that regional accent tend to expand the semantics of the already available words.

4.5 Discourse Markers and Expressive Lexical Forms

Table 4.4: Expressive and Interactional Lexical Forms

Standard Bangla	Barishal Form and Frequency	Meaning/Gloss	Pragmatic Function
Dekho	Dehi (High)	Look/ Listen	Attention marker
Areh	R re (High)	Oh/ Hey/ Come on	Emotional emphasis
Hae	Ho (High)	Yes	Agreement marker
Ekhon e	Eihon e (Low)	Right now,	Urgency
Bismillah	Bismillah koiya	Islamic invocation before eating	Religious Cultural Identity

Khub Moja	Jommer Moja (High)	Hyperbolic exaggeration of expressing the extreme level.	Strong affective expression
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These indicators bring conversation intimacy and engagement. The commonly used dialects *dehi*, and *aareh* reinforce interpersonal interaction. According to Tagliamonte (2006), the features of discourse-level are key to understanding sociolinguistic variation since they demonstrate how the speakers regulate interaction. The discourse markers are highly localized in this dataset and can hardly be substituted by standardized equivalents.

4.6 Frequency Distribution of Lexical Substitution

Table 4.5: Frequency Table of Lexical Substitutions

Standard Bangla	Barishal Form	Frequency (Approx.)	Context
Manush	Monu	18	Common reference to people
Amader	Mogo	12	Possessive pronoun
Tar	Hayr	4+	Refer to third person
Golpo	Goppo	3+	Gossip
Dariye	Kharaiya	2+	Action Verb
Poribesh	Amej	2+	Environment
Parthokko	Tofat	2+	Difference
Shokal	Beinnakale	2+	Refer to time
Pakhi	Pokkhi	2+	Nature related

Kaj	Kam	2+	Action
Bola	Kowya	4+	Speech verb
Khawa	Khamu	6+	Eating
Ranna	Pak kora	6+	Cooking context
Shohor	Bondor	3+	Refer to urban

The quantitative study of the data indicates that the lexical replacement in the dialect of Barishal is not only common but also systematic. The most frequent replacement is *manu* (*manush*), which is used over 18 times throughout the recordings. The use of pronoun variation is also very strong especially *mogo/mora* instead of *amader*, which is a strong regional identity marking. There is a particular lexical variation in the areas of daily life activity, food behavior and social life. Moreover, the verbs are used as the main locations of dialectal variation because verbal forms like *koy*, *khamu*, and *pak kora* are high-frequency. In the comparative sense, the Barishal dialect exhibits a more elevated frequency of localized lexical elements in the informal speech than the Standard Bangla. Dialectal identity is maintained through the use of various forms of lexical meanings to convey a similar meaning. The results indicate that the lexical replacement of the Barishal dialect is not accidental but has certain patterns and serves as an indicator of local identification and social orientation. Moreover, speakers tend to switch styles depending on the context, where Standard Bangla is used in formal communication and the Barishal dialect is used in informal or home communication, which is why the sociolinguistic importance of these variations is significant.

4.7 Dialect Contact, Media Influence, and Lexical Adaptation

The discussion of the data measured reveals that, as much as the Barishal dialect still has strong regional characteristics, it is not totally alienated by outside linguistic factors. The level of exposure to the Standard Bangla through education, television, social media and mobile communication has brought about a dialect contact situation. Consequently, speakers at times use standard lexical elements in their speech especially on the discussion of formal subjects, education, and communication beyond their local community. But such incorporation does not entirely supersede the regional forms but it establishes a form of selective adaptation. The recordings indicate that there is a situation when speakers switch between dialectal and standard forms of the same conversation. As an example, one can start speaking in a regional form and then switch to a more standard form of pronoun or verb when they want to explain a statement or when the discussion becomes formal. This tendency implies that speakers have a more lenient linguistic repertoire, and they can switch between the varieties based on the communicative requirements. Significantly, this sort of alternation does not reveal instability in language, rather it represents sociolinguistic competence and consciousness. The other notable finding is that the use of lexical substitution is well evident in the expressions of emotion and the cultural context i.e., when one talks about food preparation, family issues or even local experiences. Regional vocabulary still prevails in these identity-based and intimate spheres even in the case when speakers are confronted with standard forms. This implies that media and education can only foster some of the lexical choices though, high frequency pronouns and verbs which are deeply rooted in the dialects cannot be altered. Thus, the results of this section can show that dialect contact in Barishal does not lead to a full convergence to Standard Bangla. It, instead, gives rise to a hybrid language situation where speakers strategically choose forms depending on the context, audience and topic. The dialect

remains a powerful local identification despite the growing exposure to the external linguistic norms.

4.8 Sociolinguistic Significance and Identity Construction

The facts are clear that lexical replacement in Barishal idiom is not only a linguistic phenomenon but it is a socially significant practice. Local dialects are used as group identifiers and unifying elements among the listeners. In the taped discussions, the participants naturally and without hesitation or correction used dialect forms. This means that the dialect is prestigious in the immediate society and is strongly linked with genuine nature and authenticity. The use of regionally differentiated pronouns, verbs and discourse markers remain uniform and reinforce interpersonal relationships and shared cultural information. The use of such forms like regional possessives, expressive particles by the speakers indicates intimacy and membership of groups. Through this, lexical substitution acts as a tool of forming social identity on day-to-day interaction. The dialect turns out to be a symbolical expression of the common past, rural traditions, and social values. The other aspect that is noted in the recordings is the informality and formality of the situations. The speakers have reported that they are inclined to move toward more standard forms in institutionalized situations, i.e., at school, at work or in official communication. Nevertheless, the dialect is predominant in family or community relationships. This trend proves that speakers are highly sociolinguistically conscious and they consciously control their linguistic variation in reference to social expectations. The fact that the dialect can change styles does not undermine it but, instead, emphasizes its social importance. In general, the results of this section prove that lexical replacement in the Barishal dialect is an important part of identity creation and social

integration. The dialect is not just a sort of a regional speech form but a strong tool that helps speakers to communicate a sense of belonging, solidarity and continuity with the community.

4.9 Conclusion

Analysis of the recorded conversations reveals that the common substitution of lexicon is one of the major and structural aspects of Barishal dialect. These data demonstrate that speakers are always ready to substitute Standard Bangla words by regional ones, especially those items found in pronouns, verbs, and vocabulary reflecting the local culture. These replacements are those in natural spontaneous speech and they do not change in various conversational situations but they are constant elements of the language system of their speakers. The results also show that the process of lexical substitution is directly linked with the social identity and day-to-day culture. Food vocabulary, rural life, and environment vocabulary also seem particularly intransigent to standardization, indicating that vocabulary in these areas serves as an effective source of regional identity. Simultaneously, speakers show the consciousness of standard forms and also report the movement towards more standard Bangla in the case of formality. Nevertheless, in less formal and within-community communication, the dialect is still dominant, and this indicates that style-shifting is dependent on the context instead of dialect loss. Moreover, the statistics reveal that despite growing exposure to the standard and dialect contact, the main lexical framework of the Barishal dialect is maintained. High-frequency objects like pronouns and common verbs are most often resistant to change and it appears that it is socially meaningful linguistic elements that have higher chances to be maintained over time. In general, the results of this research prove that regular and systematic lexical substitution in Barishal dialect is socially significant, and is deeply rooted in the cultural and communicative activities of the speakers. The dialect is not only a local form of

Bangla beyond a very vital resource that allows its speakers to express the identity, solidarity, and common cultural knowledge.

Chapter Five

Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the results that are proposed in Chapter Four concerning the current sociolinguistic theories and pertinent empirical studies. This discussion is not just to be able to restate the results, but to provide it in the frameworks of the wider theories of linguistic variation, identity formation, dialect contact, and language maintenance. The transcription of the captured conversations indicated that there were systematic and regular cases of substitution of lexics in the Barishal dialect especially in pronouns, verb forms, possessives, discourse markers and lexics that were culturally embedded. This chapter shows the correspondence between these patterns and variationist sociolinguistics, social identity theory, style-shifting theory, and social network models of language maintenance.

5.2 Systematic Nature of Lexical Substitution (RQ1)

There is a systematic nature of lexical substitution. Among the most important discoveries in this paper is that there is system and structure in lexical substitution in Barishal dialect and not arbitrary. In the recordings, there were various replacements made on the same lines and contexts. Items that were high-frequency, like possessive pronouns (e.g., regional forms of *aamaader*, *tomaader*), demonstratives and frequent verbs always had their dialectal forms. Variationist sociolinguistics defines linguistic variation as a co-existence of alternative forms, which convey the same referential meaning but differ socially/stylistically (Labov, 2008). These forms are called variants and they are not placed in their positions by accident but through social conditioning. This

theoretical position is supported by the current study. More so, Labov (2001) believes that common and high-function grammatical features can be very slow to change, since they are intertwined in the daily speech. The statistics are a big indication in this assertion. The standard forms of core lexical items like pronouns and the auxiliary verbs were hardly used in place of informal language. This implies that replacement of lexical in Barishal does not pertain to the level of simple vocabulary replacement but a very institutionalized aspect of grammatical and lexical system of the dialect. Although Labov (1972, 2008) confirms that linguistic variation is not only systematic, but also socially conditioned within speech communities, his empirical concentration is predominantly constructive via phonological variables within urban America. However, as contrasted with the present paper, this argument is applied to the lexical replacement in a rural Bangla dialect where even such fundamental lexical categories as pronouns, verbs and culturally entrenched nouns are found to exhibit consistent and repeated patterns of variation. This implies that systematicity is not confined to either phonological or morphological levels, but is also a powerful phenomenon at the lexical level in under-documented regional varieties. In contrast to the previous studies of the Bangladeshi dialects that tended to treat the lexical variation as being incidental to the process of phonological change (e.g., Ahmed, 2016; Karmaker, 2019), the present results reveal that the process of lexical substitution itself is structured, common, and patterned in the community of Barishal speakers. In addition to that, there is recent study that has supported the significance of lexical variation in sociolinguistic study. Although the earlier studies laid great emphasis on phonological variation, recent academic studies have acknowledged the existence of lexical choices that are structured and have social meaning to the same extent (Fankhauser et al., 2026). The current results are an addition to the increasing amount of data to this area by showing the regular occurrence of lexical replacement in a regional dialect in Bangladesh.

5.3 Style-Switching and Contextual Change (RQ1)

The results also indicate evidence of style-shifting. Respondents said that they are more consciously inclined to use standard form of Bangla in such formal situations as schools or official communication and retain dialect forms in less formal and domestic situations. According to Labov (2001), style-shifting is a phenomenon that is used when speakers modify their linguistic behavior based on the attention given to speech and social situation. In the same vein, Meyerhoff (2018) believes that speakers have a linguistic repertoire, which comprises more than one variety, and they are the ones that choose between them, in a strategic manner. These theoretical views are supported in the current research. It was also observed that speakers were sociolinguistically aware and competent in that they could use dialect and standard forms interchangeably based on the audience and the purpose of communication. Notably, such alternation does not reflect dialect erosion. Rather, it embodies the ability of having two languages in varieties of the same language. The fact that dialects are still used in the intimate and emotive speech also shows that regional words have a high level of affective meaning. Explanatory or formal speech tended to use standard forms, and narrative and experience speech tended to use dialect forms. Although Labov (2001) views style-shifting as a variation based more on attention as a result of monitoring speech, the current results indicate that in the Barishal context, style-shifting is attention-driven as well as domain- and identity-sensitive. That is, speakers do not merely change styles because of formality or observer effect, but also because of some kind of social meaning attached to institutional and intimate realms. That is partly how Meyerhoff (2018) concept of linguistic repertoire applies in this case, as the decision to use dialect versus Standard Bangla does not solely rely on its strategic character, but heavily on the expectations of what is deemed right according to cultural standards. The current data indicate a more stable pattern of diglossia with dialect being functionally safe in

the emotional and narrative areas, as compared to the previous works on the topic of contact between two dialects in Bangladesh (e.g., Haque, 2016; Khan, 2017), which primarily emphasize the convergence towards Standard Bangla in the formal fields.

5.4 Dialect Contact and Media Influence (RQ1)

The study indicates that the dialect contact and influence of media do not significantly affect the development of new dialects. The other important conclusion that this research made is that contact between dialects and exposure to the media can influence lexical decisions of speakers. The participants have mentioned that they see Standard Bangla on a regular basis on television, social media, school texts, and cell phone communication. This exposure exposes them to the common lexical forms in their language and sometimes affects their language, especially when talking about education, technology or formal subjects. Nonetheless, the discussion indicates that this is a selective and not a transformative impact. Dialect forms were not completely abandoned by speakers, they were just used in certain cases when the clarity, formalism, or general understanding was needed. This trend indicates that speakers continue to have a functional difference between dialect and standard varieties and use them depending on communicative requirements. This kind of behavior expresses sociolinguistic competence and awareness as opposed to linguistic inconsistency. It is also found that style-shifting is most common in cases where the speakers mention institutional or academic concepts. In such situations, more common Bangla words were occasionally used, potentially because typically these are used in formal learning institutions. Conversely, as the discussion turned personal story, everyday life, or domestic scenes, dialect varieties soon came back and took over the discourse.

Moreover, the survival of dialect forms even after a large-scale exposure to the media indicates that change in language does not occur exclusively as a result of exposure to the standard varieties. Community norms, social identity and habitual patterns of interaction are equally significant. The use of the dialect was not seen by the participants as wrong or inferior, on the contrary, it was seen as something natural and befitting use in less formal situations. Such a favorable attitude to the dialect makes it less likely to be quickly leveled or replaced. The other interesting observation is that some of the high-frequency lexical items especially pronouns, auxiliary verbs were highly resistant to standardization. These aspects are well ingrained into the vernacular speech and they are applied unconsciously, therefore are less prone to outside interference. Conversely, vocabulary that is less frequent or vocabulary specific tended to vary a little more meaning that change in lexicon can start in the periphery of the vocabulary as opposed to the structure of the vocabulary itself. In general, the results show that dialect contact and media exposure cause the lexical flexibility and do not undermine the structural integrity of the Barishal dialect. Although the existing research on the convergence of the Bangladeshi language (Haque, 2016; Khan, 2017; Tanvir, 2025) focuses on the fact that the standardization and the leveling of the dialect occur gradually due to the increased media exposure and the educational process, the current results complicate this claim as they demonstrate a selective pattern of influence. Instead of triggering a homogenous process of lexical substitution, in the Barishal situation, media exposure works in a domain-specific fashion, and influences mostly institutional and technical vocabulary, with the core vocabulary and grammatical characteristics remaining fairly intact. This implies that convergence is not a linear process but a functionally constrained process, in which speakers vigorously uphold a boundary between identity-marking dialect forms and externally driven standard forms. In this regard, the results build on Fishman (1972) concept of domain-based

language use by revealing that even under the high media exposure conditions, dialect maintenance still occurs based on social identity affirmation and the community norms other than being completely subdued by external linguistic influences. Rather, speakers create balanced linguistic repertoire that has both dialect and standard forms that have different communicative and social functions.

5.5 Lexical Substitution and Construction of Identity (RQ2)

The other significant result of this study is the great association of lexical substitution and social identity. Dialect forms were most widely used among the participants in the informal communication with family members, neighbors, and close acquaintances. It was spoken with confidence and naturally without correction and hesitation. This tendency proves the argument that the indexes of linguistic variation are on the side of social identity (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005). Bucholtz and Hall (2005) observed that identity is not a predetermined feature but is created in the process of interaction and language is at the core of such a process. The use of regional pronouns, verbs and discourse markers served as symbolic signs of in-group membership and collective cultural knowledge in the current research. The recurrent use of culturally entrenched words, particularly those of the food category, instincts of agriculture, and expressions of country living is another indication of the language as the manifestation of the lived. According to Holmes (2013), the variation of vocabulary is usually associated with social practices and cultural contexts of the speakers. Cooking, fishing, seasonality, and family activities discourses had the densest presence of dialect forms in this research. This means that the dialect is strongly connected with the local ecological and cultural reality. Thus, lexical substitution in the dialect of Barishal also serves as a system of language and as the social resource to articulate belonging, solidarity, and common past.

As opposed to previous variationist research (Labov, 1972; Trudgill, 1983) that largely only demonstrates that linguistic variables are associated with broad social categories like classes and styles, the current results indicate a more well-structured pattern in which particular lexical domains (e.g., food, agriculture and religious expressions) are systematically linked to identity construction. This is in contrast to some of the past research such as the one conducted by Rahman (2012) and Karmaker (2019), which considered lexical variation to be a secondary phenomenon derived out of phonological variation (Rahman, 2012; Karmaker, 2019). This paper has shown that lexical substitution is a primary and stable identity marker in a daily interaction. The novelty of the Barishal data is that there is a distinct clustering of lexical options around culturally based domains, which implies that identity is not only indexed by style or structure, but also by the use of very repetitive and highly social vocabulary. Nonetheless, this pattern of identity seems to be more pronounced in informal situations suggesting that lexical identity marking might not be equally distributed throughout all speech events.

5.6 Social Networks and Maintenance of dialect (RQ2)

The results of the research point out to the fact that close-knit and tightly-knit social networks are significant to preserve dialectal features within the Barishal speech community. The vast majority of the taped conversations were held with family members, relatives, neighbors and long-time acquaintances that are constantly interrelated in the informal environment. These types of interaction generate a setting whereby regional forms of lexical expressions are being strengthened on a daily basis. Speakers who hear and use the same forms of dialect within their close group of friends become accustomed to them and difficult to alter with time. This finding is in line with the social network theory advanced by Milroy and Milroy (1985) which states that strong and

multiplex social bonds also play a more effective role in the maintenance of the local linguistic norms. In closely knit societies, the spread of linguistic innovation is slow as speakers are highly geared towards the group expectations and common language practices. The Barishal speech community had the same features. There was minimal tendency in the participants to use regional forms in addressing people in the same locality which implies that dialectal vocabulary is the default medium of communication in known localities. The other significant point that can be noted in the data is the dialect features that are transferred across generations. Although younger speakers were exposed to the standard form of Bangla through education and digital media, nonetheless a large number of dialect forms were still used by the speakers when engaging with their elderly family members naturally. The above implies that the domestic setting is crucial in preserving local patterns of speech. The fact that dialects have been used by the generations means that vocabulary replacement is not only an aspect of the elderly generation but is also an ongoing aspect of the modern speech among the population.

Additionally, there are also emotional and cultural connotations that people associate with the use of dialect, which makes it even more prominent. Dialects might be applied during the narration of personal experiences, sharing jokes or describing the cultural peculiarities such as cooking or traditional practices in the place where the participants live. Dialect vocabulary in such contexts functions expressive and affective meaning which may not be well expressed using standard forms. This affective aspect enhances the bond of speakers towards their regional forms and enhances even more the stability of dialects. Thus, the results indicate that social structure, high level of interpersonal contact and cultural value of regional speech are the key factors that help to preserve dialect use in Barishal. Despite external influences on the language, the power of the local

networks still manages to maintain some fundamental characteristics of core lexical elements of the dialect. In contrast to the original model of social network by Milroy and Milroy (1985), which focuses on the role of dense social network in keeping non-standard varieties alive, the current results enlarge upon this explanation by demonstrating that in Barishal, the strength of networks not only helps to preserve dialect forms but also strengthens certain lexical domains like kinship terminologies, food-related vocabulary, and other expressive discourse. Unlike previous studies in the field of sociolinguistics that mainly examine topics of phonological stability within small-knit groups, the present findings indicate that lexical replacement is also hard to alter in the context of well-established familial and community relations. What is so new in this work is that there is evidence that lexical stability is not a homogenous phenomenon, culturally based and emotionally charged lexical units are much more strongly upheld than neutral or institutionally-influenced vocabulary. This implies that the dialect preservation in Barishal is not merely the structural effect of social networks, but a culturally selective process that is influenced by identity and emotional involvement with the use of language.

5.7 Lexical Variation as a Culturally and Regionally Gaining Identity (RQ2)

The aim of this study was to discuss how cultural and regional identity can be seen in lexical differences in the Barishal dialect. The discussion of the speech data recorded shows that the instances of lexical substitutions are not arbitrary phonological deviations of Standard Bangla, the speakers use them as the socially significant language resources to build, negotiate, and sustain regional identity. To begin with, the pronoun variation becomes one of the most powerful identity indicators in the data set. The use of *Amago* (*amader*) as forms (*amader*), *tomago* (*tomader*), and *mora* (*amra*) are constant among speakers and recording. The importance of these replacements is

especially noticeable since pronouns are not only high-frequency and structural central but also central in language use. The norms of dialects are well-established as evidenced by their stability. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) explain that identity is a construction of interaction and is indexed by linguistic options that provide evidence of belonging. The frequent repetition of the forms of local pronouns in this case is a marker of in-group solidarity and a collective locality. The unwavering use of these forms by speakers in informal community contexts is an indication that the dialect is used consciously or socially programmed to be at par with the regional identity.

Second, a significant part of lexical replacements is associated with food, cooking habits, and farm life. The ecological and gastronomic environment of Barishal contains words like *kodu (kumra)*, *borhudi (borboti)*, *hol mach (shol mach)* and *chingur mach (chingri mach)*. Barishal as a riverine and a fertile area is a socio-economic area that is much connected with fishing and agriculture. These lexical forms are used again and again in cooking narratives, this is an indication of lived experience, and not the abstract use of vocabulary. According to Labov (2001), linguistic variation is socially stratified and there are usually environmental and community-based factors that correlate with the variation. This paper demonstrates that lexical items related to food are coded with cultural activity, local farming, and domestic cuisines, which lead to strengthening the regionality. These replacements can be seen thus as symbols of culture which perpetuate the collective memory and heritage.

The religious expressions also have an impressive role to play in identity creation. Such lexical elements as *Bismillah koiya* and *Alhamdulillah* are found in ordinary speech, especially in the context of cuisine. This implies that the regional identity in Barishal is not geographical only but

also sociocultural and religious. Holmes (2013) underlines that language is a mirror of social values and belief systems that are inherent in communities. The fact that religious lexical items are incorporated into the informal speech proves that the fields of spiritual identity and regional linguistic practice overlap. The expressions bring about a multi-layered identity structure whereby locality and faith are both performed concurrently in the language.

The other important aspect that can be seen in the data is the expressive intensifiers like *osthir*, *sei lagse* and *jommer moja*. They serve as affective amplifiers, and they are reused over and over again to demonstrate enthusiasm, satisfaction, emphasis, etc. Variationist sociolinguistic theory proposes that linguistic forms tend to have some social significance other than the literal one (Meyerhoff, 2018). Intensifiers will help to develop a particular regional manner of interacting, which is emotional richness and exaggeration. They are socially conventionalized phenomena and not idiosyncratic phenomena, as evidenced by their occurrence across recordings. With the help of such emotion-based language, speakers will engage in a familiar Barishal oratory style that enhances the unity of the community.

Spatial identity is also upheld by rural environmental vocabulary. The use of words like *uranda* (*uthan*), *hora* (*dhakna*), *harajol* and *hejde* are used in reference to common objects, cooking processes in the villages as well as other types of domestic spaces. These lexical forms are the material culture and localized living ways. According to Milroy and Milroy (1985), social networks which are dense help to preserve non-standard linguistic forms. The fact that these localized lexical items are still in use, even as the level of exposure to the Standard Bangla, in the form of education and media, increases, suggests that through mechanisms of community cohesion

and dialect preservation. The dialect is thus still strong since it is maintained in the form of well-knit social groups. Also, the information implies some signs of sociolinguistic sensitivity and language use in a context. Although the participants can be educated and presumably capable of using Standard Bangla, they strongly apply dialectal forms in informal communication. According to Labov (2001), linguistic variation is socially significant and in most cases, it reflects the position of speakers in such specific social situations. Dialect choice as a sign of solidarity and authenticity within intimate groups seems to operate in this study. The scarcity of standard forms in the spontaneous conversation indicates that the way of using dialect is not caused by linguistic restriction but is a socially significant stylistic decision.

In general, the results show that the lexical variation in the Barishal dialect is a multidimensional index of identity. Collective belonging is strengthened by pronoun replacements, ecological and cultural heritage is encoded by food and agricultural terms, spiritual identity is expressed using religious terms, expressive intensifiers create regional speech forms, and material and geographical culture is encoded in rural environmental words. All these patterns prove that dialectal lexical variation is socially stipulated, culturally significant, and structurally consistent. The current results are more fine-grained and semantically structured than the earlier variationist models (such as Labov 1972 and Trudgill 1983) which describe variation mainly in broad social terms (class, age, rural life, and emotional expression) and organize identity marking in a systematic way according to specific cultural domain. Although Bucholtz and Hall (2005) lay a strong stress on the fact that identity is formed through interactions, their model fails to indicate the lexical areas where identity is most fixed in daily speech. This is then furthered by the current Barishal data which demonstrates that lexical substitution is not randomly spread throughout vocabulary but

rather highly concentrated in semantically-based areas that are culturally embedded. The novelty of this research is the recognition of regular clusters of identities in the use of the lexicon, with some categories (e.g., food related and pronoun forms) being much more stable and highly social than others. This indicates that there is not only socially significant lexical variation in Barishal, but also structure patterned and selectively stable variability across contexts, giving a more domain-specific twist to prior general assertions about variation and identity. Instead of being a manifestation of linguistic deviation or erosion, these differences form a dynamic and valuable manifestation of local affiliation, cultural continuity and club unity in the present-day social linguistic environments.

5.8 Conclusion

Resting on the discussion in this chapter, some significant findings can be made on lexical substitution in the Barishal dialect. Firstly, the analysis establishes that there is lexical substitution patterned and socially conditioned instead of being random or occasional. The consistency in the examples of how the particular forms of the dialect are used in various discussions shows that these aspects can be viewed as fixed constituents of the dialect as a linguistic unit. The results also indicate that high frequencies lexical items that are especially pronouns and common verbs exhibit great stability in contexts. These factors were found repeatedly in the dialectal form in the process of informal communication, which evidences the strong infiltration of these elements in the real speech. Simultaneously, the research demonstrates that the use of dialects also acts as an effective identity, solidarity, and continuity of culture. The most natural use of regional vocabulary was observed when speakers addressed close friends and when the subject matter was related to culture, meaning that the dialect is significant in showing belonging to social groups and sharing the

common experience. The other important finding is that speakers show high degree of sociolinguistic awareness and apply style-shifting in relation to context. The participants said and sometimes showed a preference to more standard Bangla in stuff labeled as official or institutional, and dialect forms in informal communication. It means that speakers can have a flexible language repertoire and can modify their language in relation to the social context without losing their local variety.

In addition, the data indicate that thick local social networks play an important role in dialect features preservation. The regular communication within families and communities promotes the further use of regional lexical forms which helps to maintain the linguistic stability. Despite the fact that the introduction of some standard lexical items takes place due to the media exposure and educational influence, these factors do not substitute the core lexicon of the dialect. Rather, they generate a selective adaptation situation in which speakers apply standard forms in particular situations. The dialect is still useful as a significant communication, identity and culture generating tool in the speech community. In sum, the paper adds to variationist sociolinguistics as it shows that the lexical replacement in a local variety of Bangla is not only systematic but also semantically and culturally organized in certain areas of identity, including kinship, food culture, religious expression, and rural life. Compared to previous work (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005; Labov, 1972; Trudgill, 1983), which mostly accounts variation in terms of broad social categories or performance of interactional identity, this study demonstrates that lexical variation can be a stable and domain sensitive identity indexing system in everyday conversation. The major input of the study is that lexical items in Barishal do not appear as a random distribution of variation but constitute systematic clusters that are always consistent with the cultural practices and social

meanings. Nevertheless, given that the data only covers a rather small, context-specific sample, additional studies based on larger datasets and longitudinal design would be required to ensure the consistency and broader generalization of these trends to the general Barishal speech community.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

6.1 Summary of the Study

The current paper has explored the trends of common lexical replacement in Barishal dialect and also explored the sociolinguistic elements that affect uptake, usage, and continuity of these regional lexical forms. The study aimed to find out the naturally occurring speech in order to draw up the recurrent lexical variations and to discern their linguistic and social meaning with an approach of the sociolinguistic context. The research was founded on documented conversational data gathered among the interlocutors that frequently use Barishal dialect in their daily communication. Special consideration was paid to the repetitive lexical categories like pronouns, verbs, possessive forms and lexicon that is culturally embedded. The emphasis of the analysis was on the patterns of replacement between Standard Bangla and dialectal, and also the study on how language could be influenced by the social context, relationships between people and the communicative purposes. This study intended to bring about a more precise insight of the functioning of lexical variation in a geographical speech community and the process through which the use of dialects is influenced by both the linguistic structure and the social dynamics.

6.2 Summary of Major Findings

The results of this research prove that lexical substitution in the Barishal dialect is systematic, recurrent and socially conditioned as opposed to being random or irregular. It was found that certain dialectal forms are used by several speakers and dialogue scenarios, which means that the lexical elements are stable and firmly rooted in the linguistic system of the dialect. High-frequency

items, especially pronouns and frequent verbs, were very resistant to the substitution of standard forms, and this indicated that core vocabulary is at the center of dialectal identity. The second notable observation is that dialect use is an important indicator of social identity and group membership. The most common forms of dialects that speakers employ when interacting informally are mostly used when they address their family members, friends, and even their fellow members in the same locality. In these settings, the dialect acted as a means of communication as well as a means of familiarity, unity and common cultural experience. The most extensive use of dialectal words was found in discussions about daily activities, personal accounts, and culturally localized issues, meaning that there was a close relationship between the social realities experienced and language use. It was also established in the study that there was definite context-dependent style-shifting. When talking about academic, institutional or formal issues, some of the participants would resort to more standard Bangla forms, but would revert to dialectal forms in more informal and interpersonal contexts. According to this trend, speakers have a versatile linguistic repertoire and can adapt the use of language to communicative requirements, recipients and context. This flexibility portrays sociolinguistic competence and not dialect decay.

In addition, the results show that thick social networks play a major role in the preservation of dialect features. Intimacy of close family and community systems enhances the regional lexical patterns and promotes the intergenerational stability of dialect use. The younger speakers who are exposed to standard Bangla by way of education and media still exhibit the use of dialect forms in their daily everyday conversation, which testifies to the power of the local languages. Besides this, the paper demonstrates that media exposure and formal schooling present some normative lexical feature to the vocabulary of speakers, but it is restricted and situation-specific. The use of standard

forms was selective especially in topic specific or formal speech and dialectal forms were still predominant in informal communication. Such a co-existence of the dialect and standard varieties is an indication of balanced linguistic environment where speakers at the same time preserve their regional identity and flexibility in their communication.

6.3 Sociolinguistic Implication

This study has a couple of significant implications not only on sociolinguistic studies, but also on the study of Bangla dialect, especially. To begin with, the research proves that the lexical variation is an important and systematic aspect of dialectal difference. Although it is customary to delve into the variations of the linguistic study with phonological or syntactic differences, the current study demonstrates that the lexical replacement can also be a good source of information regarding the language usage trends, social identity, and social interaction within the community. Second, the paper reflects the significance of language as a social resource. The Barishal dialect is not a simplified or informal version of the Standard Bangla, but a complex and intentional system of the language that has developed under the influence of historical application of the language, relations and other cultural activities. Their ultimate maintenance despite the prominent exposure to standard varieties indicates that the processes of language change are not only institutional (that is, determined by education and media), but also affected by the social organization of the region, cultural attachment, and everyday interaction patterns. Third, the results emphasize the significance of studying language in the social framework. The use of dialect cannot be explained entirely without taking into consideration interpersonal relations, communication environment, expression of emotions, and cultural practice. The paper has thus supported the sociolinguistic perspective that linguistic variation is directly related to social meaning and identity formation.

6.4 Contribution of the Study

This study contributes to the sociolinguistic field and research on the dialects of the Bangladesh language in a number of ways. First, it gives empirical record of the pattern of the substitution of lexical variables within the Barishal dialect in accordance to the naturally gathered conversational data. This type of data analysis is especially useful as it also reflects the real usage of the languages instead of the elicited or fabricated examples. Second, the research is an addition to the existing piece of literature on the topic of lexical variation in regional dialects of Bangla. Although the phonological difference has been common in the study of dialect in Bangladesh, the systematic lexical substitution in verbal spontaneous speech has been studied comparatively less. This study can contribute to the gap in the literature because it reveals common lexical patterns and evaluates their social meaning. Third, the paper combines descriptive analysis and theoretical interpretation, correlating the patterns of observed linguistic with the general sociolinguistic terms like variation, identity, style-shifting, and social networks. Such theoretical basis makes the research more scholarly and places it in the frame of the traditional academic debates. Lastly, the paper offers a methodology that could be applicable to researchers who might wish to explore the issue of dialect variation with conversational data and the use of qualitative analysis in the future.

6.5 Future Research Recommendations

This research has given some precious information about the lexical substitution in Barishal dialect. However, a number of issues can still be explored. The study can be furthered in the future by research focusing on phonological and syntactic variation of the dialect to give a more thorough linguistic description. Comparative research with other regional varieties of Bangladesh would be useful in also determining larger patterns of variation and regional variation in Bangla. Moreover,

the researchers can continue to study the effects of urbanization, migration, digital communication, and mobility on the use of a dialect in the long term. Longitudinal research might give valuable information on the issue of patterns of lexical replacement being constant or slowly changing according to social and technological changes. The other research area that is likely to give greater results in the future is the study of language attitudes towards regional dialects especially among younger speakers. The relationship between the dialect uses and speakers, their perception of it in terms of education, employment, and social prestige might provide more understanding about the long-term viability of regional varieties.

6.6 Concluding Remarks

To sum up, this paper has shown that the Barishal dialect is still linguistically powerful, socially significant, and also applied in its daily use. Lexical substitution is a form of systematically and socially rooted characteristic of the dialect which indicates the linguistic structure and cultural identity. The fact that dialect forms are persistent over time and among different speakers and speakers and among different situations suggests that regional forms still have an important role in the determination of communication and the perpetuation of the social relationship as well as the continuation of cultural traditions. The results once again confirm that dialects are not heterogeneous and peripheral forms of language but intricate and organized systems which are meaningful in linguistic and social terms. This research will play a major role in exploring linguistic diversity and sociolinguistic behavior in the community who speak Bangla by writing and examining the patterns of lexical replacement in natural conversation.

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Appendix

APPENDIX A

Research participation consent form

I do agree on my own free will to take part in the research study whose title is Lexical Variation in the Barishal Dialect of Bangla: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Patterns and Identity Construction. I realize that this study is aimed to investigate lexical variation in the Barishal dialect and its connection with the cultural and regional character. I have been told that my involvement will consist of a semi-structured interview and/or a natural conversation, which might be recorded on audio, to be used in research. I know that my involvement would be fully voluntary, and I can withdraw any time without any repercussions and I can skip any questions I would not like to discuss. I have also been assured that any information that I submit will not be disclosed and that my name will not be revealed and pseudonyms will be used instead of my real name. I am aware that the data that I will collect will not be used in any other way other than in academics. My signature below is a confirmation that I have read and understood the information above and would like to take part in this study.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Appendix B: Transcribed Primary Data

Appendix B1: Recording 1 (Natural Conversation Data)

Topic: Conversation about culture and lifestyle

Transcript (Orthographic):

S1: Tor dharonada thik-i ache, Barishal-er jibonjatra Dhakar chaite onek alada ar shanto.

S2: Ho, ar ekta bishoi hoilo ei jaigai monu ekjon arekjonre onek beshi chene.

S1: Samajik jogajog eihane onek beshi valo. Eihane otokhani byastota nai jemon *bondore*.

S2: *Monu mora* goppo kore ba ekshonge shomoy katanor sujog beshi pai.

S1: Ho, eta sotti. *Mogo* elakai protibeshir shonge shomporko khub valo.

S2: Kew oshuk-bishuk hoile ba kono shomossai porle, ashepasher monu sohoje sahajjo korte ashe.

S1: Mogo rannar upokoron ar rannar *poddhoti* o onek alada.

S2: Mogo elakai sorishar tel ar sthaniyo moshla beshi bebohar kora hoi.

S1: He-ar karone shadar onek *tofat* hoi.

S2: Ager tulonai kichu kome geche, *eihane* Barishal ilisher jonno bikkhato.

S1: Ilish baishak kale paoa jai.

S2: Ekhane ekdom pri family ilish rainda kore.

S1: Oneke benna kale jai, dokane jaiya boiya thake, goppo kore- ekdom ekta asor *hoiya jai*.

S1: Beinnakale gram er jibon shuru hoy.

S2: After namaj oneke khete e kheti korte jai, keu bazar e jai.

S1: Pakhir (pokkhi) dak ar batash miley ekta shanto poribesh (amej) toiri kore.

S2: Gram e ekhon shohor er cheye eto byastota nai – bondor-er moto.

Appendix B2: Recording 2 (Cooking Interaction Data)

Topic: Cooking (Hol Mach & Borhudi)

S1: [R] *Monura*, aij borhudi dia hol mach moja koira khamu.

S2: Bismillah.

S3: Kolorda osthir hoibo, dehi!

Cooking Process:

S1: Pratthome hol mach da sejhte *hoibe*.

S2: ear loge- makhte hobe holud, nun.

S3: Frypan e sorishar tel diya mach vazaite hobe.

S1: Ek pith sejja ayle, ultai dimu r ek pith.

S2: Ekhon dimu khushboi peyaj ar kachamrich.

S3: Toh peyaj bata, roshun bata, jira bata, moricher guri dimu.

S1: Dimu borhudi mosla bhalo moto koshano.

S2: Ehon mou *jaibo* (jhol toiri hobe).

S3: Ehon dhoinna pata diya uthai *thuite hobe*.

Eating Interaction:

S1: Oh vaidi, ekta nela!

S2: Abbu, matha ta ekta chaban daw.

S3: Khub na - jommer moja!

Appendix B3: Recording 3 (Cooking & Small talk)

Context: Cooking (Kodu & Gorur Gost)

S1: Aijgo mora *khamu*- kodu diya gorur gost.

S2: Kodu dimu na gost *dimu*?

S3: Dui dai deo mia.

Cooking Process:

S1: Pratthome mora katmu hoilo giya kodu, hear por eidare vajte hoibe.

S2: Ar pane koraiyer moddhe khusainna peyaj ar moshla dite *hoibe*.

S3: Koshano moslar vitre gost dite hoibe.

S1: Hear pore hora diya dhaika *thuite hoibe*.

S2: Ohon gost hejde hoibe.

S3: Ho, gostp heijja aiche, eiber kodu dite hoibe.

S1: Gosto kodu diya rainda *hoise*.

S2: Bhorta khaye jhuimma diye *monura*.

Eating Interaction:

S1: Bhorta diya shuru kori.

S2: Test ta - osthir hoise.

S3: Ami 10 er moddhe 10 dimu!

Appendix C: Observation Checklist (Sample)

Segment	Observation
Topic of interaction	Open Kitchen, Yard, Social gathering
Attendees	Family members, Friends
Subject of conversation	Food, Daily life, Local culture
Lexical Substitution	High frequency words (koira, Hoise)
Code-Switching	Rare, mostly dialect
Cultural conditions	Socially used words (hol mach, mou)
Sort of interaction	Casual, impulsive
Kind of speech style	Expressive, Emotional-driven

Appendix D: Transcription Conventions

1. Transcriptions in Bangla orthographic form.

2. Local dialects (e.g., koira, hoise, mogo, monura) remain unstandardised.

Speakers: S1, S2, S3

3. Pauses (Short [,], Medium[.] and Expressive [-]) emphasis (*italic*) and repetition [R] used where appropriate.

4. No Standard Bangla correction for authenticity.

5. Use of culturally particular language maintained (e.g., Bismillah koiya, jommer moja).

Appendix E

Example of Lexical Coding

Table 4.1: Pronoun and Possessive Substitution Patterns

Standard Bangla	Barishal form and Frequency	Meaning/ Gloss	Example from Data
Amader	Mogo (High)	Our/ Ours	Mogo elakai
Amra	Mora (High)	We	Mora dekhamu
Tomader	Tomago (High)	Your/ Yours	Tomago barta
Tar	Her (Medium)	Your/ Yours	Her karone
Tomake	Tomare (Low)	You	Tomare ghuraiya
Tomra	Monura (High)	You/ Yours	O monura.
Vaire	Bhaiji/ Vaidi (Low)	Brother	R e vaidi

Appendix F

Sample Questions for RQ2

1. When do you normally speak in your local (Barishal) dialect?
2. Which one do you prefer to speak in, dialect or Standard Bangla? Why?
3. What does it mean to you when you use dialect words such as mogo, mui?
4. Do you think you sound like you are from somewhere? How?
5. Do you think there are any words in your dialect that represent your culture or way of life?
6. Do you speak differently, when you leave Barishal (e.g., Dhaka)? Why or why not?
7. Do you feel embarrassed or proud to speak your dialect in public? Explain.
8. Do people ever react to your dialect? What are those reactions?
9. Is there a difference between how young people and older people in your region speak? How does that affect identity?
10. Is there any dialect word of food, festivals or village culture you think is only from Barishal?
11. Do you think the dialect language helps to strengthen relationships in your community? How?
12. Do you think that the Barishal dialect is going to be used in the future? Why or why not?